COMIC WORLD

FEBRUARY 1995 ISSUE 36

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FEBRUARY 1995 ISSUE 36

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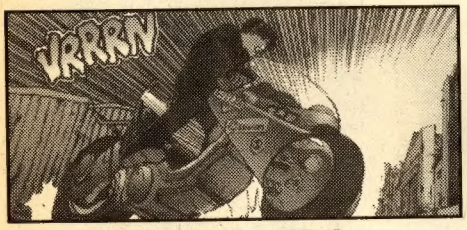

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Comic World

UP-FRONT

First issue of the new year and some good news for the industry for once: B & P Valentine, who were recently charged with obtaining artwork by fraudulent deception, pleaded guilty and were fined £200 by the courts in December. The charges related to the obtaining of artwork from top comic artists on the pretext of raising money for various charities which, on investigation, did not exist: when contacted by a researcher investigating the fraud, money was said to have been raised for a heart fund run by Newcastle Hospital. The hospital informed us that no such fund existed, nor had the Valentines donated any money to any trust or charity connected with them.

B & P Valentine have operated under various assumed names since at least 1987 when the Brian Aldiss Fan Club was launched. Brian told us that he'd become suspicious when the organiser, who had said she was bedridden, began sending him newspaper clippings of her success in a local women's football team. By then he'd financed a booklet for the club...

Their most recent attempt involved raising money to refurbish a non-existent hospice; a letter was circulated to artists asking for signed artwork which was to be auctioned. When contacted, local charity organisers were extremely angry to learn of the fraud as there has been a long-running campaign to found a hospice in the area.

So we're especially pleased to see the case come to a successful conclusion, particularly as it proves both the strength and commitment of the comic community in the UK to protecting both fans and their own interests. With regular conventions and a widespread communication network through magazines such as *Comic World* and *Comics International*, through constant contact and feedback from editors and publishers, and through professional groups such as the Comics Creators Guild, the community made up from both professionals and fans is in constant touch, and in such a small, friendly community where information, gossip and conversation passes so freely, frauds of this nature will be discovered. And dealt with.

It's our third birthday next month, so make sure you're with us in thirty days.

Steve

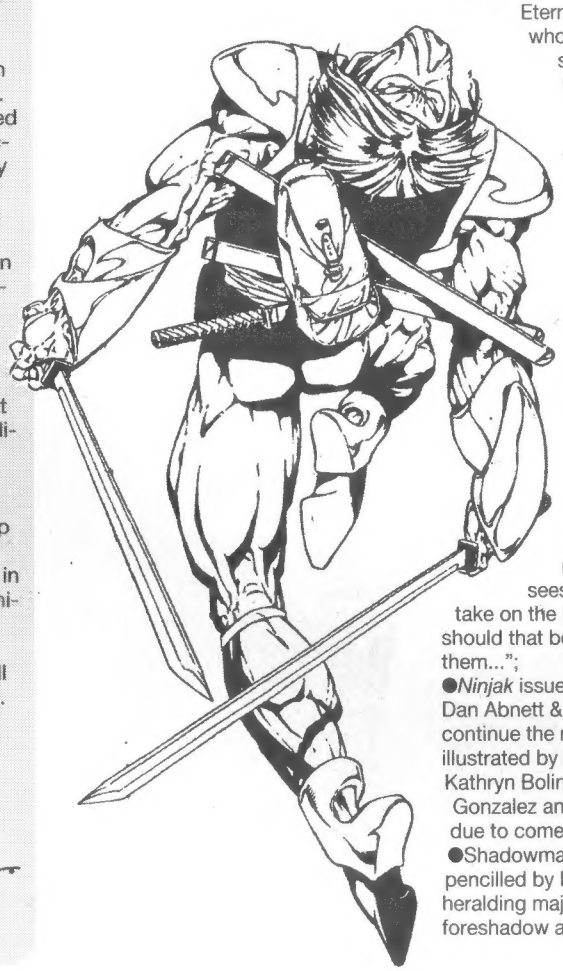
VALIANT becomes ACCLAIM COMICS

BEGIN PUBLISHING TITLES BI-WEEKLY IN MARCH

Valiant Comics is about to reinvent itself with a major overhaul to which they've given the umbrella title 'BirthQuake'; as of March Voyager Communications Inc becomes Acclaim Comics Inc., reflecting their recent acquisition by Acclaim Entertainment Inc. and will be reducing their main Valiant line to ten titles - and beginning in March they'll be released on a bi-weekly schedule with the following creative lineups:

●*Bloodshot* by Kevin VanHook: #30 and #31 drawn by Norm Breyfogle. A strange entity is sent from the future to destroy all nanite-based life forms, and that includes the cybernetic Samurai and British Secret Service agent Bloodshot. Alternate future issues will be pencilled by Sean Chen;

●*Eternal Warrior* by John Ostrander will be drawn alternately by Jackson Guice and Paul Gulacy. Issues 36-37 are drawn by Ted Halsted and both conclude the 'Mortal Kin' storyline in which the Eternal Warrior discovers who has been killing some of his closest friends, and begins 'Childhood's End', which presents a story from the Warrior's boyhood and reveals some of the secrets of his immortality;



●*Magnus Robot Fighter* by Tony Bedard: issues 49-50 are drawn by George Saravia & Anibal Rodriguez, and in the future Saravia will alternate with penciller Kevin Kobasic. The milestone 50th issue sees Magnus and Slagger take on the Invisible Legion (or should that be "doesn't see them...";

●*Ninjak* issues 17-18 are written by Dan Abnett & Andy Lanning and continue the run of that title illustrated by Andrew Currie & Kathryn Bolinger, although Jorge Gonzalez and Mike Manley are due to come on board shortly;

●Shadowman will be written and pencilled by Bob Hall, with #38 heralding major events which will foreshadow a new era in the existence of Jack Boniface;

●*Solar, Man of the Atom* will be written and pencilled by Dan Jurgens from #46, the first of a five part story that "will shake Solar's universe off its foundations." This issue introduces a new hero, The Sentry, who's tracking mysterious sightings of a superhero with a mysterious radiation symbol on his chest, Phil Seleski is still trying to get his new reactor on-line...say, haven't we been here before?;

●*Timewalker #8* is written by Kevin VanHook with art by Anthony Castrillo and Gonzalo Mayo, concluding the 'Harbinger War', whilst #9 is by Bob Hall & Susan Wright, Don Perlin & Gonzalo Mayo, as Timewalker returns to 1998, seconds before Jahk'rt makes a kidnap attempt on his friends, leading into *Timewalker #0*;

●*Turok, Dinosaur Hunter* is written by Tim Truman and drawn by Rags Morales. In #25 Turok, Andar and Chichak encounter a new order, the Warriors of Mothergod. A new Overlord is attempting to control the Lost Land and Turok finds himself in a potentially unhealthy alliance with the bloodthirsty time-pirate, Captain Red;

●*The Visitor* by Kevin VanHook is pencilled by Bernard Chang for issues #4-5, with Luke Ross alternating in the future. The latest storyline has a special effects crew turning their movie magic to something a little more criminal.

BIR
QUA

Watch out as a famous Southern Californian theme park gets trashed;

●*X-O Manowar* will be pencilled alternately by Bart Sears and Andy Smith, written by Ron Marz, and some big shocks are in store for Aric in #44 when he awakes in a Roman prison in 409AD to find that 43 issues of his adventures have just been the dream of a captive Roman prisoner.

"BirthQuake is not just the name of a one-time promotional effort," says Jon Hartz, Senior Vice President of Acclaim. "It marks the beginning of a radical rebirth of Valiant. Beginning in March, fans and retailers alike will reap the benefits of Valiant's new partnership with Acclaim Entertainment...Our goal is to do a better job of publishing, marketing, and selling comics than we've ever done before."

In one of the biggest shakeups in recent comics history, the moves have, according to Hartz, addressed three substantial problems being faced by Valiant in recent months:

✻Art and Editorial: "We feel that although our comics have strong original concepts, lately the art and storytelling aren't up to the high standards we set for ourselves." The solution is to "eliminate our clutter and focus our best creative energies on a smaller number of titles and characters."

✻Diversity: "For some time now, Valiant books have been perceived as having a 'house style,' and the sense among fans was that if you've seen one Valiant book, you've seen them all. We searched for a way to break away from that perception," hence the hiring of a number of new names, including Dan Jurgens who will be leaving *Superman* as of issue 100, Norm Breyfogle who switches allegiance from Malibu's Bravura line, Bart Sears, whose recent self-publishing venture failed to ignite the industry, Paul Gulacy, Jackson Guice, and Mike Manley.

✻Market Conditions: "With over 700 titles being released into the Direct Market every month, Valiant's output of eighteen to twenty titles (the lowest number of titles for the top six publishers) often gets lost in the shuffle." The solution: "Releasing our strongest titles biweekly. This gives creative teams the flexibility to cut loose with the art and expand the scope of the storytelling because the instalments are more frequent, and easier for fans to follow. Additionally, most retailers feel it's easier to order correctly on four issues of continuous story (Superman, X-Men) in a month than four issues of four separate comics. As long as the quality, our central focus, is there every issue, fans will be in the stores twice a month to follow the adventures of their favourite Valiant superheroes."

"These three creative solutions define BirthQuake," adds Hartz. "We believe the publishing programme we've put in place to begin this March will turn out the best comics, by some of the biggest superstars today, on an innovative schedule that will improve reader awareness, and sell through to a whole new group of Valiant fans."

Armada

Valiant have also added a third line to their Valiant titles and the recently announced Windjammer line. The Armada imprint has been formed to publish two titles related to the smash hit trading card game: *Magic: The Gathering - The Shadow Mage* and *Ice Age - A Magic: The Gathering Miniseries.* "The *Magic: The Gathering* comic series will build upon the card game's rich storyline, creating a visually gripping epic tale that will give *Magic: The Gathering* and comic book fans another means to enjoy this incredible fantasy," said Acclaim's Publisher Steven Massarsky.

The former, written by Jeff Gomez and painted by Val Mayerik, relates the tale of Jared, rescued from a battle and cared for by a lowly Spellsquire who prepares the young lad to take vengeance on the powerful Planewalker who slew his father. The story will continue in a follow-up mini-series.

The latter, written again by Gomez, drawn by Rafael Kayanan with covers by Charles Vess, is set during an age when glaciers covered the land of Dominaria, closely related to the *Ice Age* expansion deck planned for May 1995.

Acclaim have also tied up a deal with the Fleer Entertainment Group to produce trading cards on a worldwide basis.

TOP 10 SELLERS 1994

Diamond have released figures based on sales of comics between November 1993-October 1994 (i.e. with 1994 cover dates) which chart the top ten selling titles and individual issues of the year. Without further ado:

TOP SELLING TITLES

(last year's position and number of appearances in Top Ten appear in parentheses)

1 (2) X-Men (12)
2 (3) Uncanny X-Men (12)
3 (-) Wolverine (12)
4 (1) Spawn (9)
5 (-) WildC.A.T.s (7)
6 (7) Batman (5)
7 (-) Generation X (4)
8 (-) Wetworks (4)
9 (4) Superman (4)
10 (-) Pitt (3)

TOP SELLING INDIVIDUAL ISSUES

1 Violator #1 (Image)
2 Spawn/Batman crossover (Image)
3 Stryke Force #1 (Image)
4 X-Men #30 (Marvel)
5 Spawn #17 (Image)
6 Spawn #18 (Image)
7 Generation X #1 (Marvel)
8 Spawn #21 (Image)
9 Spawn #22 (Image)
10 Gen 13 #1 (Image)

In issue 33's Batman Competition, the winner were Kevin Larkin, Glyn Jones, Sarah Waites, N. Herwin, Daniel Farrell and Don Cooper, all winners of the BatMad video; the same issue's Mask Competition winners of a bunch of Mask goodies were Graham Cole, Robert Davies, Mark Hargrave, Julia Forster and Darren Wyndham. Congratulations everyone. If you entered and didn't win, keep trying - we've plenty of great competitions lined up for 1995.

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Thor joins Godwheel

Marvel's acquisition of Malibu is going to be felt in the latter's first major release of 1995 when Thor guest star in Malibu's Godwheel cross-over, although according to Godwheel editor Dan Danko it's not a gimmick - plans had been made 60 days prior to the acquisition deal for Thor to play havoc in the Ultraverse.

"We aren't saying how long Thor will be staying, but he will be setting into motion the plot points that will wind through the Ultraverse until the end of 1995, leading to other joint Marvel/Malibu projects." The Marvel hero's appearances will tie-in to what Editor-in-Chief Chris Ulm calls the 'Ultraverse Spine', a linear timeline of Ultraverse and Marvel projects which runs throughout 1995. Exactly which issue he'll appear in is being kept a closely guarded secret, although it is known that George Perez will draw that issue. Also fairly widely reported is the top secret appearance of a Marvel villain in the series, but I wouldn't want to spoiL...OK, I might. Whoever it might be, he's also to be appearing in a Necro/Mantra/Lord Pumpkin mini-series scheduled for April.

"When *Godwheel* ships, expect to see a tremendous amount of industry attention focused on the Ultraverse and Marvel," says Creative Director Tom Mason. Yet with the news of the acquisition already cooling on the presses, attention is more likely to be focused on the movements of creators in the wake of the announcement. Norm Breyfogle, whose *Metaphysique* was announced as a Bravura title due in April, has recently signed up with Valiant, and it is rumoured that other creators will use this opportunity to move away from or to the Malibu/Ultraverse/Bravura imprints depending on their allegiance to Marvel. It will also be interesting to see whether the proposed DC/Malibu crossovers which were being discussed in San Diego (see *CW #33* News) will now occur.

IN THE WORKS

Dark Horse

John Byrne returns from his brief hiatus to produce a two-issue sequel to *Babe* which has our heroine battling cyborg alligators in the streets of New York beginning in March. The next *Next Men* mini-series, *Pain* should launch in May.

Also due in March is the one-shot *Happy Birthday, Martha Washington* which reprints two Martha stories (from *Dark Horse's Fifth Anniversary* and *San Diego Comic Con Comic #2*) along with a new tale by Frank Miller & Dave Gibbons.

Looking further ahead, *The Big Guy and Rusty the Boy Robot* with Geoff Darrow should be out as a two-issue series this spring, and Miller will have another *Sin City* series out next autumn. Incidentally, the *Sin City: A Dame to Kill* For hardcover is being recalled as two sections were printed out of order. Copies are being replaced free of charge.

Since this seems to be the Legend section here, Mike Mignola's next *Hellboy* series will return next autumn with the 4-issue *Wake the Devil*, to be followed by Art Adams' *Monkeyman & O'Brien: Attack of the Shrewmanoid* next winter.

Throughout 1995 DH will launch a number of mini-series based around their Comics' Greatest World line, including *Nexus Vs. Vortex* by Mike Baron & Joe Comstock, *Agents of Law*, replacing *Agents of Change*, *Mecha, Ghost* with art by Adam Hughes, *Barb Wire* (to be written by Jo Duffy from #10), *Motorhead, King Tiger* and *Hero Zero*. During the summer there will be a 4-issue bi-weekly series, *Mask World Tour* in which The Mask falls through the Vortex.

Picking up the story from the current *Aliens: Berserker* will be another 4-issue mini-series, *Aliens vs Predator*: War by Randy Stradley, due in May; Stradley has a two-parter due to start in March: *Aliens vs Predator*: Duel with art by Javier Saltares & Jimmy Palmiotti. New titles starring The Shadow, James Bond and Indiana Jones are also due throughout the year.

Harlan Ellison's Dream Corridor begins a regular monthly run in March, during which month Masamune Shirow's *Ghost in the Shell* also begins publication in 3 80-page volumes. April is DH's latest Manga Month with *Domu, Gunsmith Cats, Legend of Mother Sarah* beginning and both *Appleseed* and Innovation's *3x3 Eyes* collections due. Adam Warren's *Dirty Pair: Fatal But Not Serious* is due to begin in July in colour.

DC

The Death of Clark Kent

Superman #100 marks the beginning of the 7-part 'Death of Clark Kent' storyline; the celebration issue is double-sized with a holographic foil-stamped cover, written and pencilled by Dan Jurgens (his finale on the book) with Josef Rubinstein & Brett Breeding inking.

The story is prologued in *Superman: The Man of Steel #44* in which an attempt on Clark's life leaves him in no doubt that his cover has been blown and his secret identity is known to a deadly enemy. In part 1, Clark's parents are ambushed in Smallville and Superman has to decide whether to stop a criminal mastermind in Metropolis, or save his parents. The decision will mean the end of Clark Kent, and - in *Adventures of Superman #523* - perhaps the end of Lois Lane.

This years DC annuals concentrate on *Year One*, stories of pivotal moments in the early careers of DC's superheroes. Among the first to be explored will be Batman, the Flash (Barry Allen), Green Lantern (Hal Jordan), and the definitive origin of the first Robin, Dick Grayson. In addition to Year One adventures for newer heroes like Superboy, Green Lantern and The Ray, there are some dramatic stories from the life of Doomsday and Shadowdragon which will reveal secrets about a new adversary for Superman. The latter stars in the first release, *Superman: The Man of Steel Annual #4* by Louise Simonson, Paul Leon & Dennis Janke in which Superman meets a number of other heroes for the first time. *Robin Annual #4* by Chuck Dixon, Jason Armstrong & Robert Campanella is the aforementioned look at the origin of one-time Robin, Dick Grayson, now better known as Nightwing.

DC are producing the film adaptation of *Tank Girl*, written by Peter Milligan with art by newcomer Andy Pritchett and featuring a wraparound cover by John Bolton. Technically this will only receive US and Canadian distribution as the adaptation will be published in the UK by Titan.

Following the success of both *Death* and *Sandman* Galleries, March will see *The Endless Gallery* shipping with interpretations of Dream, Destiny, Destruction, Desire, Despair, Delirium and, of course, Death. Artists include Greg Capullo, Howard Chaykin, Mark Chiarello, Al Davison, Dave Devries, Rebecca Guay, Jill Thompson and many more. Sandman itself will be skipping a couple of months and resume publication with #70, coverdated July.

More from Vertigo: *Sandman Mystery Theatre: The Tarantula* is a trade paperback collection of issues #1-4 with a new cover by series writer Matt Wagner...*Shade, the Changing Man #59* launches a new 5-part story arc, 'Nasty Infections'...Paul Jenkins is the new writer of *Hellblazer* from #89 which takes John Constantine into the heart of the Australian wilderlands...

Deadman: Lost Souls gathers together two Prestige format series, *Deadman: Love and Death* and *Deadman: Exorcism* in one 200-page volume, written by Mike Baron with art by Kelley Jones. Jones has painted a new cover and the book is introduced by the series' original editor, Archie Goodwin...Gordon Purcell and Terry Pallot, the artists of Malibu's Deep Space Nine have jumped ship to join *Star Trek: The Next Generation* as of issue #71 which begins a new five parter by Michael Jan Friedman and is printed on new glossy stock...so's *Star Trek #71*...With Christmas and New Year out of the way, it's time to think of Spring, and - slipping out of their Santas costumes and into their dirty macs are Alan Grant & Jim Balent to present *Lobo's Big Babe Spring Break Special* in which the Main Man is hired to protect the improbably-sized contestants of the pan-galactic Miss Voluptua contest...*Icon* reaches a double-sized issue 25 in which Augustus Freeman recounts his experiences of slavery and two world

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wars to an intergalactic court...and Milestone also have a new 5-part series focusing on the volatile pyrokinetic rogue member of the Blood Syndicate, *My Name is Holocaust* by Ivan Velez, Jr., Tommy Lee Edwards & Steve Mitchell...And, the *Animaniacs* are back in an ongoing monthly series...

A deadly new Vigilante debuts in Deathstroke #47...Firestorm, the Nuclear Man, returns in *Extreme Justice #4* which has a guest penciller in Mozart Couto...James Robinson & John Watkiss team up for a 3-part *Legends of the Dark Knight* story, 'Werewolf' which begins in #71...

And finally, DC have announced their first title for 1996 and the future may no longer be what you imagined. In the fully-painted *Kingdom Come*, Ross and scriptwriter Mark Waid are designing and redesigning heroes for a Elseworlds-style DC Universe future. "We develop the next wave of heroes, arriving on the heels of those we're familiar," explains Waid, "but they've made the world a more frightening place."

Image

Extreme Studios are adding some major talent as they launch the 'New Order' of extreme titles: "This event marks a fresh start for our books, and signals the beginning of some dramatic changes at Extreme," says Extreme's Marketing Director Matt Hawkins. Helping those dramatic changes become reality will be Alan Moore, working on a *Badrock vs The Violator* mini-series, Chuck Dixon on *Prophet*, Jo Duffy on *Glory*, Keith Giffen on *The Futurians* and Marv Wolfman on *Brigade;* six new titles will debut in 1995, although *Youngblood Strikefile* and the *Troll Holiday Special* will be discontinued. *Youngblood: Year One* has been cancelled, and will be resolicited as a fully-painted series later this year.

Jim Lee has instigated a price cap on all titles coming out of Wildstorm Productions which will maintain a $2.50 for all their 32-page titles regardless of cover enhancements or other special features. The first title to be effected is *Warblade: Endangered Species #1* which drops in price from $2.95.

Hellshock #4 comes in two forms - a normal cover and a variant with a Bill Sienkiewicz cover...*Mark 5* has changed title: it's now *The Power of the Mark...*

Malibu

Ultraverse news this month leads with the conclusion of the 'Rafferty Saga' in *Firearm #18* as Alex Swan and Rafferty fight over the life of a small child who may be the most powerful Ultra ever...but that won't be the end of Rafferty.

Mantra gives birth to a daughter in *Mantra #18*, and Kevin reveals his duel identity to Kelly in *Prime #20*, which also introduces a new Ultra.

Marvel

2099 A.D. - After Doom

There's a New World Order planned for the 2099 line as Doom 2099 takes over America. 'One Nation Under Doom' begins in *Doom 2099 #29*, triggering a new age for the 2099 universe, a new family logo and new enhanced colour separations and glossy paper for the whole line.

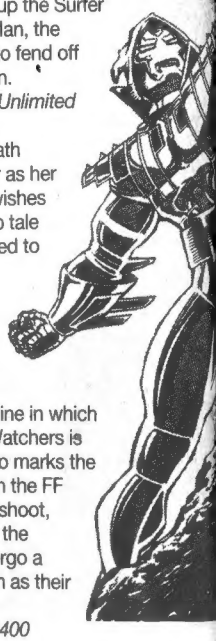
From Latveria, Doom infiltrates the USA financial and computer systems and quickly conquers the USA, bringing with him a harsh regime. The take-over is preceded by two specials: *2099 A.D. #1*, a 48-page one-shot which gathers together the 2099 heroes to weather the oncoming storm, and *2099 Special: The World of Doom*, a comprehensive look at the New Order which will be effecting the world of 2099 for some time to come.

March is Marvel's Silver Surfer month with a *Silver Surfer Ashcan*, the weekly *Marvel Spotlight on the Silver Surfer #1-4*, and a startling new direction which begins in *Silver Surfer #104* when Norrin Radd suffers a nervous breakdown and becomes a cosmic butt-kicker out to clean up the universe. Also available again are two classic collections, *The Coming of Galactus* reprints the origin of the surfer from *Fantastic Four #48-50* as a 48-page bookshelf one-shot and *Silver Surfer: The Enslavers* is a hardcover graphic novel by Stan Lee & Keith Pollard which teams up the Surfer with the FF, Spider-Man, the Hulk and the X-Men to fend off an interstellar invasion.

Cosmic Powers Unlimited #1 also ties in to the celebration when Death chooses Silver Surfer as her consort against the wishes of Thanos. A back-up tale reveals what happened to Captain Marvel.

The Fantastic Four celebrate 400 issues with the 64-page conclusion of the 'Watchers' Lie' storyline in which the truth about the Watchers is finally revealed. It also marks the first meeting between the FF and their teenage offshoot, Fantastic Force, and the team members undergo a power transformation as their line-up changes.

Fantastic Four #400



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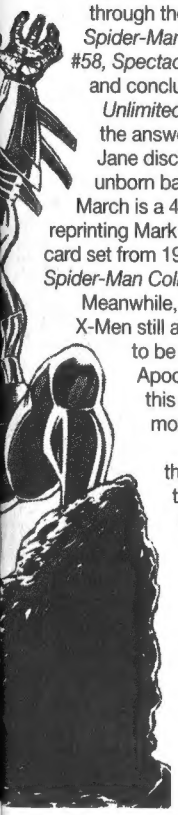
also previews 'Atlantis Rising', a crossover running through *Fantastic Four*, *Namor* and *Warlock* which will rock the Marvel world to its foundations as the underwater kingdom rises to the surface and becomes the spoils of a battle between Atlanteans, Deviants, Monsters and Inhumans. The struggle will drastically change Sub-Mariner's relationship with the cosmic quartet. The participants of the battle will all be featured in *Fantastic Four Collectors' Preview*, a 48-page one-shot which also pays tribute to the original architects of Atlantis, Kirby & Lee. The Inhumans also get their own title, a 64-page one-shot taking a look at the enigmatic race.

Paul Johnson represents the death of Elektra in *Marvel: Portraits of the Universe #3* which also features the FF as painted by Dan Brereton...*Ghost Rider #61* is a 48-page special concluding the 'Betrayal' storyline as the Spirit of Vengeance is hunted through the streets of New York...

Anthony Ludgate is reborn as *Druid* in a new ongoing series by Warren Ellis & Leonardo Manco. Tired of being the laughing stock of Marvel's supernatural universe, and having had the crap beaten out of him by Daimon Hellstorm, the occult wannabe emerges from an series of rituals with magnified occult powers, a body covered in weird Celtic tattoos, and ready to walk along the underbelly of sanity and reality.

Web of Spider-Man #124 sees the beginning of a new 5-part crossover, 'The Mark of Kaine' in which Kaine kidnaps Mary Jane. Can Peter, arrested and charged with murder, save her? And just who is the mysterious figure in the background who claims to be the *real* Peter Parker? The storyline continues through the pages of *Amazing Spider-Man #401, Spider-Man #58, Spectacular Spider-Man #224* and concludes in *Spider-Man Unlimited #9*, and you'll learn the answers, and what Mary Jane discovers about her unborn baby. Also beginning in March is a 4-issue collection reprinting Mark Bagley's Fleer trading card set from 1993 - the *Amazing Spider-Man Collection*.



Meanwhile, in another reality...the X-Men still aren't what they used to be as the Age of Apocalypse continues. See this issue's feature for more.

Phantom 2040 is the latest of Marvel's TV tie-in titles, drawn by Steve Ditko - and for long-time Marvel junkies there's the first ever collaboration of Ditko and John Romita Snr on a centre-spread pin-up.

Marvel's musical line-up expands with the following titles in the works: *AC/DC*, *Billy Ray Cyrus* by Paul S. Newman & Dan Barry, *Brooks & Dunn: Hard Workin' Heroes* by Barry Dutter & Gray Morrow, *Grand Ole Opry* by Paul S. Newman & TBD, *House of Pain* by Gordon Rennie & TBD, *Marty Stuart* by Paul S. Newman & TBD, *White Zombie* by Rob Zombie & various. Other titles take the musicians to more esoteric places, including *Dr. Dre: The Man With a Cold, Cold Heart* set in 1999, *Elvis Presley: The Comeback #1* (of 6) which takes the King on a magical mystery tour back through some of the highlights of his life, and *Onyx* who visualise themselves in a post-atomic world; *Rock Video Girls* is based on the pay-per-view specials, and here the babes are in fact members of a spy agency in an interstellar adventure...not that any of them could spell interstellar... *Snoop Doggy Dogg: Unleashed* by Floyd Hughes & Karl Bollars has Snoop and a female reporter stopping riots instead of starting them, and *Woodstock* is revisisted by various artists and a group of time-travelling teenagers...

Alice Cooper: The Compleat Last Temptation collects the 3-issue Neil Gaiman & Michael Zulli series into one volume, and cover artist Dave McKean is the artist of *The Rolling Stones: Voodoo Lounge*, a 48-page bookshelf one-shot based on the Stones latest album.

Verotik

Due to censorship by the printing house Quebecor, Verotik's flagship title, *Verotika #1* with stories by Simon Bisley, Grant Morrison and Glenn Danzig, shipped late. The book, which had been ready for press for three weeks, fell foul of a last minute decision. Already partly printed by Ronalds, the remainder of the magazine was printed by Brenner. Glenn Danzig, Verotik's Publisher, asked: "When are we going to stand up for our rights and stop this covert censorship? Just like every other entertainment medium, comics are not limited to one specific age group...The comics industries self-imposed censorship such as cover advisories, and printers refusing to print certain material is holding back a possible explosion of comics in America."

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BRITISH NEWS

Anime UK

Recent winners of the Osamu Tezuka Award for best English language anime magazine, *Anime UK Magazine* is undergoing a revamp which will also put it on a monthly schedule from February 27. More pages are promised allowing more in-depth articles on shows that have yet to be seen in the UK, more background on Japanese music, games, pop and trash culture related to anime, better continental and American news, plus a three-part A-Z giveaway with the first three issues. Editor Helen McCarthy has said that the price is also likely to drop below £3.00 per issue, and that the changes won't involve losing any of the fun elements of the magazine.

Battleground

Andy Brewer's *BattleGround magazine* has folded due to personal problems which at the moment seem insurmountable. First published in November 1992, the magazine was seen as a successor to some of the great fanzines of the 1970s and 1980s, notably *Fantasy Advertiser*. Andy contacted *Comic World* with the news, and assured us and his subscribers that their money is currently being returned to them.

Fizog

Britain's latest humour comic, *Fizog*, was released on December 8, conceived and published by three British creators with backgrounds in both traditional and adult titles. Mervyn Johnston, a ten-year veteran of *Buster, Whizzer & Chips*, etc., met Dean Wilkinson and Lee Healey whilst working on Acne and, dissatisfied with the state of humour comics, the three created a title that, as Johnston told *Comic World*, "was the kind of thing we would have liked when we were kids. Fleetway's titles are now mostly TV related and they're not interested in doing anything new. We hope we're doing something original for kids; the humour is more 'over the top' than traditional and we hope they find funny, too. Humour works best if you produce what *you* find really funny: that comes across in the writing and the artwork. If you just think 'This is what kids will find funny,' that just comes over as patronising; doing a kids comic is far more challenging than an adult comic because kids are so honest. They'll tell you if they think it's crap." At the moment, *Fizog* is bi-monthly, priced 90p, and available from newsagents. For the future, Johnston hopes to go monthly and expand the page count.

Fleetway

Issue #72 of the *Judge Dredd Megazine* sports a Trevor Hairsine Dredd cover for the historic meeting of Dredd and President Bill Clinton, transferred in time through a mind-swap in a story by John Wagner & Siku which "makes more sense when you read it than when I'm describing it," according to editor Dave Bishop. 'Shimura' returns in a series of six single episode tales by Robbie Morrison, the first illustrated by Duke Mighton. Ending this issue are 'Son of Mean Machine' and 'Calhab Justice', and the issue is rounded out with four pages of exclusive Dredd material, the *Megazine* for once scooping *Comic World* to some pics.

#73 has a Steve Sampson cover celebrating the return of Cassie Anderson in a new series written by Alan Grant; also new this issue is 'Maelstrom' by Robbie Morrison & Colin Macneil about a group of Deep Space Judges, the return of 'Harmony' (who died in a one-off in #62! Or did she?) by Chris Standley & Jim Murray, and a new Dredd 4-parter by John Wagner and Ashley Wood entitled 'Skar'. The second 'Shimura' story is drawn by Robert McCallum, and there's a competition to win some exclusive Dredd film goodies.

2000AD is running a 'Finn' four-parter in Progs 924-927 by Pat Mills & Liam *(Hulk)* Sharp, originally drawn for *Crisis* some five years ago, but newly redialogued by Mills and having had some decorative borders drawn by Sharp to bring it up to date and size. 'Soul Gun Assassin' ends in Prog 925, with two 'Terror Tales' in Progs 926-927 on the run up to this year's spring boom issue. Both 'Skizz III', 'Timehouse II' and the Dredd 'Exterminator' strip also end in 927 to make way for an all-new cast.

Titan Books

Titan have signed up the Tank Girl book-of-the-film, *The Making of Tank Girl*. The book will look at the origins of the character in *Deadline* magazine and her transition to movie star and will tie-in with the movie release in May.

Latest breaking news see page 57

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PEOPLE AND PUBLISHING

Dan Chichester has been fired from *Daredevil* having recently successfully relaunched the character. Internet reports say that the decision was made by **Bobbie Chase** whilst *Daredevil's* editor, **Marie Javins**, was on Thanksgiving holiday. His last issue will be #342, or perhaps sooner. Chichester, fired because his work was said to "confuse the editor-in-chief", will be replaced by **J.M. DeMatteis**. Meanwhile, **Scott McDaniel** has moved over to DC to work on Batman.

Tony Isabella has been fired from *Black Lightning* and is replaced by Australian scriptwriter **Dave DeVries**. Isabella has written nine issues of the series, and was dismissed before the first issue was released

The Fleer Corps has been renamed Fleer Entertainment Group Inc., and a newly created President and COO post has been filled by former Marvel Executive Vice President, **Jeffrey L. Kaplan**. As a former VP at Merrill Lynch & Co. he had worked of the sell-off of public stock in 1991 and its acquisition of Fleer in 1992 - so its not just the British Government creating their own jobs.

CHRISTMAS CARD-TOON A-THON

The London Cartoon Centre held a fund-raiser on December 10 with a host of stars from the cartoon and comic field. The talents of David Lloyd, Arthur Ranson, Dougie Braithwaite, Kev Hopgood, Hunt Emerson, Al Davison, Steve Whittaker, Nick Abadzis and many others were put to the unique task of drawing Christmas cards to order for visitors of Piccadilly's Trocadero Centre; Judge Dredd and Spider-Man were also on call to help distribute goodies and auction prizes. The LCC, now 10-years-old, has been suffering from a seemingly endless cash-flow crisis since 1991 as the recession bit deeper and donations fell. The Portabello Trust, who have run the LCC since 1988, is merging with the larger RBK&C organisation in January and moving to larger premises in Thorpe Close, London, and will begin severing its financial and administrative ties with the Centre. Course director, Eve Stickler is retiring following the recent birth of her son, and a new committee headed by scriptwriter Les Lilley is being formed to approach the Government to consider giving the LCC accredited educational status and funding.

Hart D. Fisher is breathing a sigh of relief following the ruling by Judge Thomas P. Doherty in the two-year-long courtroom battle between Fisher's Boneyard Press and relatives of victims of Jeffrey Dahmer. The claim was for emotional distress caused by Boneyard's *Jeffry Dahmer: An Unauthorized Biography of a Serial Killer*, but the ruling for eight of the nine plaintiffs was that a victim's right to privacy did not survive them. In a ninth case, that of Carolyn Smith who was portrayed in the comic, the judge said that she had at no time claimed that her portrayal was false, fictional or unrelated to a newsworthy item. Fisher is to join Verotik, replacing the departing **Valerie Jones** as Managing Editor.

Jim Starlin will be quite chuffed with his book *Thinning the Predators*, written with Daina Graziunas and about a psychic lawyer who becomes a serial killer of serial killers: the unpublished book was shown to film produced Martin Poll, who put it in the hands of agent John Klane, who showed it to Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment. With news of Amblin's interest, and Klane's adaptation bringing in a possible million dollars, the William Morrison Agency in New York promptly sold the book to Warner Books within 72 hours for another $1m. Over the next two days UK, Japanese and German rights brought in another $650,000.

Congratulations to **Bryan Talbot** who called with the news that he'd just completed the last pages of *The Tale of One Bad Rat #4*; the series has already won Bryan an award from the Comics Creators Guild, and the two issues so far released have now become part of the Victoria & Albert Beatrix Potter collection. But more interesting is a letter received by Bryan with the news that the comic is being used by groups to help children come to terms with and talk about abuse and that the comic is being used in some schools as resource material.

Spawn sunk? No, not the comic, but on Friday, December 9, a fire in the engine room of a cargo ship on-route from the Orient to the USA caused the crew to dump around 250 containers into the Pacific, including the latest shipment of Todd Toys' **Spawn Action Figures**. The 27-strong crew were picked up on the 12th. No figures are available as to how many containers contained Spawn toys, but that's precisely Todd Toys problem now...no figures are available.

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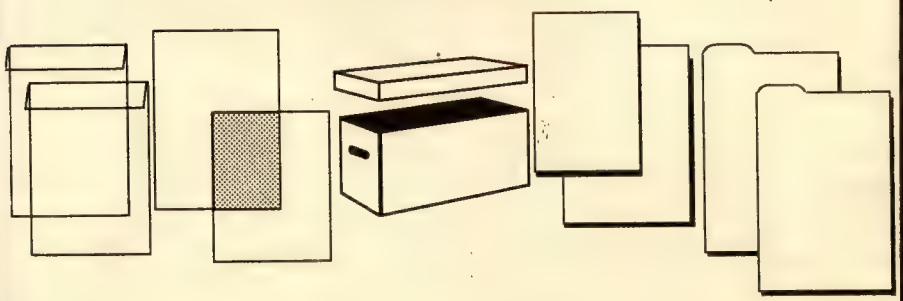

Just Comics

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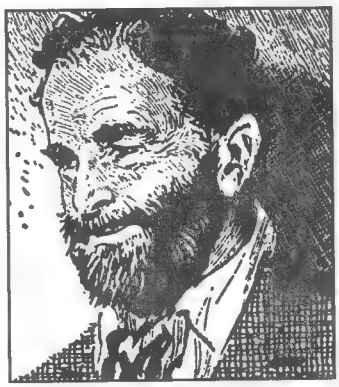
Tony Weare, best known for the his twenty-two years as the artist of 'Matt Marriott' for the Evening News committed suicide on the night of December 2nd. He was 82 and had in recent years begun to lose the ability to look after himself he so greatly treasured. His physical condition was beginning to deteriorate and, rather than face the frustration and indignity his declining health would bring, he took a taxi to the harbour at Porthleven, West Cornwall. In a cartoon left behind for friends he showed his intentions of leaping from the pier and asked them to give him a cheer if he caught the tide. He was survived by one son from his first marriage, to Hilda Trench, and a son and daughter from his second to Marian Jowett. His daughter Tessa Goldhawk said:

Tony Weare

"I'm pleased he went out in the style he wanted."

Tony was a humanitarian, philosopher, conservationist and an extraordinarily talented artist. He loved life and nature, but was never afraid to face greater truths, once saying "My thoughts are so wideranging that they go beyond most people's boundaries for science fiction. I discovered that the world is just a tiny part of everything, and that it isn't in the centre of things but tucked away in a corner somewhere. The people on this world think they know the truth, but they don't even know why the world is here or what makes it work. A philosopher once said that he would rather live in a state of disbelief and ignorance than think he knew the truth with the possibility that he could be wrong. I don't expect to know the answers, but I'm happy just to wonder."

That sense of wonder stayed with him until his very last days and was amply reflected in his artwork. He said he only had one ambition: to report what was actually going on, an ambition he achieved with his illustrations and paintings. Although he retired in 1977 if anything that broadened his outlook and experience and, even in his seventies, he was still so excited at new discoveries, he would get up in the middle of the night to sketch when an idea for a new painting made him restless.



Tony was born in Wincanton, Somerset, on January 1, 1912, and grew up in Bournemouth, raised with his brother by his mother, his father having died in the Great War. He spent three years at Bournemouth School of Art before his first unsteady steps towards professional artistry. He took his portfolio to London to the editors of *Punch* magazine who turned him away with the advice that he should see Tom Purvis, the celebrated poster artist. Purvis, noting that Tony smoked, advised him to return to Bournemouth, forget drawing and perhaps get a job with the tobacco industry.

He tried selling to all the leading magazines of the era, often sleeping rough on the Embankment until he was too dirty and too hungry to try any more publishers. Then he would return home to prepare more drawings. That harrowing early experience paid off, as his work would eventually appear in the likes of *The Strand, Pearson's, Windsor, Britannia & Eve, Nash's Magazine* and *John Bull* before the War intervened. His success he put down to having the goal to aim for, a desire to be an illustrator that he followed like an arrow straight to the target: "I just stuck at it until it happened."

After the war he returned to illustrative work, approaching the Walter Thomson's advertising agency and was immediately offered a post at £1,000 a year. The following day another agency offered £1,500, but he had no real intention of taking a post from either of them, instead accepting a commission by Complete Features to draw 500 full colour illustrations of Black Beauty, which were never used. A second commissioin for 500 illustrations of *Great Explorers* was sold to Fife Bananas who issued them in a booklet in 1946.

His first newspaper strip followed, an underwater adventure for the *Daily Herald*, before Tony was contacted by Reg Taylor, the editor of *Mickey Mouse Weekly* who offered him the 'Billy Brave' strip in that paper. His first strip to appear was 'Pride of the Circus' (1950) followed by the first adventures of 'Billy Brave' (1950-54). This long-running strip followed the schoolboy adventures of Billy at Mannington College where he is faced with the normal hardships of public school life: plenty of soccer, mysterious strangers and schoolboy pranks. Tony was a natural at comic strips and during drew other adventures for *Mickey Mouse Weekly*, 'Savage Splendour' (1951), a 'Robin Alone' adventure (1951), and 'Billy Bunter' (1952-53), the latter for Comet.

There then followed a number of newspaper strips: a how-to-play-football strip in the *Daily Mirror*, and 'The Thingamajig' for the *Daily Express*. In 1955 he was invited by Associated Newspapers to submit ideas for a new western strip. Tony's idea of a character by the name of Jeff Stryder became 'Matt Marriott'. When launched in September 1955 in the *London Evening News* it was the biggest strip published in a British newspaper (at 4" high), later reduced because of the advertising space that was taking up. Written by James

MATT MARRIOTT
by TONY WEARE
NO! TAKE YOUR FILTHY HANDS OFF ME! HEEEELP!
THEY GOT THE WOMAN, BEN! FIGHT IT IS! LET 'EM HAVE IT!
AWUH! KILL!

Edgar, Marriott was a cowboy drifter who found years of adventure with his sidekick, Powder Horn. The strip, which Tony concentrated solely on for twenty-two years, was a showcase for his talent, winning him an award from the Cartoonists Club of Great Britain who voted him Britains best adventure artist. Widely considered the best western strip published in the UK, Tony's artwork was built up in shapes of light and shade, edges defined by the interface of areas of cross-hatching and meticulous linework. The strip showed much of Tony's love for natural beauty in his depiction of horses and scenery, telling critic Paul Duncan "If you ask me to draw a car, or anything mechanical, I'd do it because I was a professional but I'd be gritting my teeth whilst I was doing it."

Tony refused tempting offers to join the staff of Associated Newspapers during his time freelancing for them, preferring the freedom of self-employment to work when he chose. The strip would generally take three hours of intense work during the day, leaving Tony free to visit the beach or the countryside around his Devon home. Working seven days a week when the strip ran only six meant he could allow himself a 52-day holiday each year in the small house he had bought in Spain. During his time on the strip he visited America and on his return to England sold his house to finance a two-year trek by Volkswagon across the States, drawing a strip each morning and spending the remainder of the day painting flowers. His route was planned a few days ahead so that scripts could be posted to him in remote towns like Lone Star, Dollar and Happyjack Springs.

Whilst in America he somehow managed to run himself over with his own car: checking a fork in the road for tyremarks to see which was used the most often, he turned to see his car and possessions rolling away down the mountain trail. Rushing after it, the car pushed him over, doubling his leg up under the red-hot engine. A passing driver pushed the car off his body, and drove off, leaving Tony injured and living off the land for a few days until his unhealing leg was going gangrenous. Eventually he made it to hospital where he remained for some weeks recovering and running up a substantial bill which his insurance company refused to pay - he had, after all, run *himself* over - and which he paid by painting a mural on the side of the hospital, living back in the Volkswagon in the hospital car park.

Returning to England, he was again hospitalised after slipping on a tile in the kitchen of his Devon home, and all the lee-way on the 'Marriott' strip was used up when the leg became infected and he found the local hospital less co-operative than its American counterpart where he had drawn Marriott whilst lying on his back, ink running down his arm from the brush. The strip was temporarily dropped, but reinstated as soon as Tony was better. But it was not long after that Tony began to think about retiring from the strip, and the last story being completed by John Burns. At its peak, Marriott was seen by four million readers every day, amongst his fans the Duke of Edinburgh.

Tony retired to his home in Devon, drawing the occasional strip that took his fancy, including a series of single pages for *Tornado,* an adaptation of the historical novel 'Rookwood' in *Look and Learn* (1980). In 1984 he drew a number of pages of the acclaimed 'V For Vendetta' for *Warrior* at the invitation of David Lloyd, but spent most of his time in later life painting and drawing for pleasure.

In his last years, Tony still retained his zest for life; his concern and love for the countryside of Hayle, Cornwall, where he then lived was a driving force which led him to once say "We attach such a great value to our own lives. Man fancies himself so much because he's managed to kill so many other things...it points up the great thing about human beings, which is that we are all so bloody human. We can't escape the barrier of our own knowledge and ingenuity." He had moved to a nursing home in recent years which restricted his mobility and abilities in so many ways, yet visitors found him optimistic and full of characteristic humour and sensitivities. His end had a dignity and appropriateness for someone who had lived so much of life's wild, restless sea. CW

With thanks to David Ashford, David Lloyd and particularly to Paul Duncan for permission to quote from his extensive interview with Tony published in ARK.

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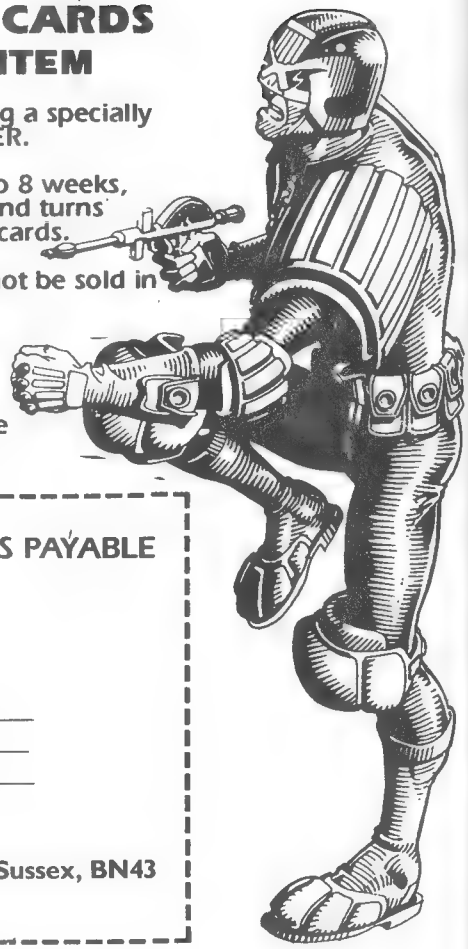

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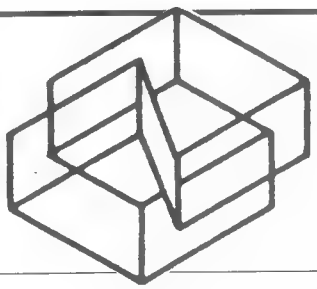

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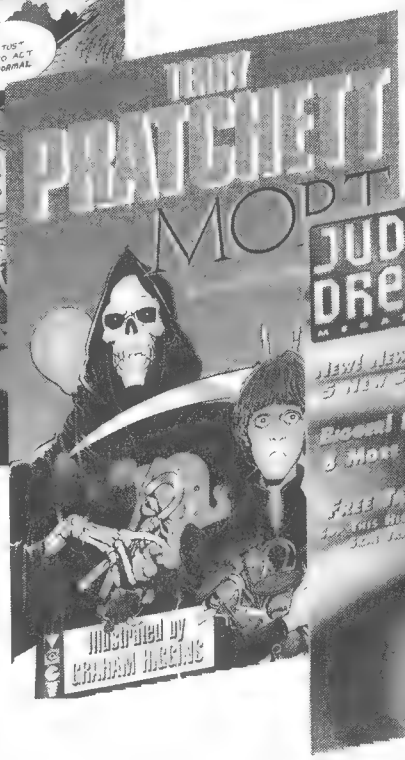
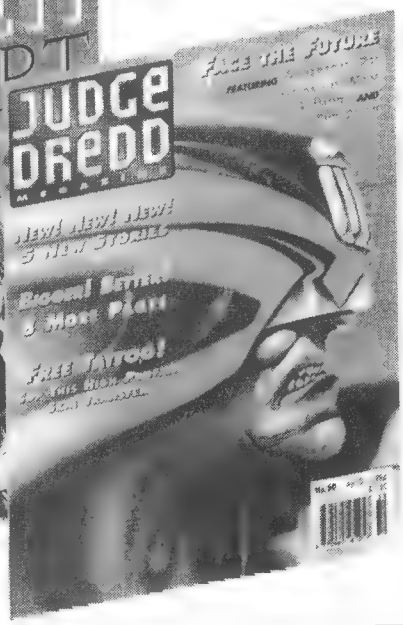
Comic World Reader's Awards

THE TALE OF ONE BAD RAT

by BRYAN TALBOT

BOOK ONE





It's time once again for the Comic World Reader's Awards, the third annual poll of reader's votes for the best of 1994.

This is it! Your last chance to vote in the third annual **Comic World Reader's Awards** for the best strips of 1994. Twelve months worth of comics - something like 8,000 comic books...and you have to choose just one name for each category! So who will be the winners this year? Will *Sandman* storm the ballot box for a third year running? Have Chris Bachallo, Steve Oliff, Todd Klein and Karen Berger pencilled, coloured, lettered and edited their way to more acclaim. Who will be receiving that fateful phone-call to say 'Hey Neil Gaiman...you won again?' (and this month we've actually remembered to put in the best writer's catagory on the form!). Are you still a *Spawn*-oholic? Did *Generation X* thrill you enough for your vote as most promising new title? How do you judge Dredd? Was *Zero Hour* just a summer hit, or hard-hitting enough for you in the Best story category? Who was the best newcomer of the year? Did the *Collected Bone* have the right stuff to make it the Best Graphic Novel or Collection? Was *Marvels* marvelous?

The Comic World Reader's Awards are the only awards voted for by fans in Britain. Don't let your voice go unheard. British or American comics, superhero or surreal, best-seller or cult classic - yours could be the deciding vote! Don't feel intimidated by the number of catagories: if you think a no-one has deserved to be known as the Best in any catagory cast a No Vote. You don't feel you've seen enough work by newcomers to make a good judgement call, fill in the rest of the form and send it in anyway.

Categories are open to all comics, professional or small press, British or American. Please vote for only one character, title or creator in each title. Votes must be cast by *Monday, 21st February 1995* - and if that sounds like a long way off, and maybe you'll get around to filling in the form tomorrow, y'know... do it today! ***Your vote may swing the balance. Let your favourite creators know that their fans have spoken!***

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MOST PROMISING NEW TITLE .....

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Writer or artist, including creators who have come to prominence in 1994 .....

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.....

Warren Ellis'

Smoke damage

I'm writing this a few days before Christmas, mostly to try and get ahead on my deadlines; this column is the only job that seems to be permanently late. Niki's still cackling in the background over the truly repulsive shirt John McCrea sent me for Christmas. Oh, it's foul. They spend money on a Michiko Koschino shirt and it just has to have a print of the Essex map, doesn't it? With Southend apparently directly over my heart. I'm going to get Don Heck to do those Batmans I wrote for John. That'll teach the vile little bogtrotter. Christmas spirit, eh?

Yeah, right. I have no Christmas spirit. A few things in recent news releases have mildly irritated me. Some of these fall under the heading of The Good Rumour, such as:

Creators are leaving Tekno Comix (whom Harlan Ellison may have been describing when he recently inveighed against "cheap sharecropper projects with figurehead marquee names") in droves, allegedly, due to a particularly bizarre editorial quirk. The editors apparently feel the best way to write comics is the approximate the pre-production of a film script, where the manuscript can be frantically rewritten right up until the second before filming. The Tekno Comix scripts are apparently being drastically overwritten by persons other than the original writers right up until the lettering is stripped onto the artwork. This is the sort of operating procedure that produces finely authored films as The Flintstones, credited to sixty writers...

Alan Davis authorised a press release regarding his departure from the Marvel book he created, The ClanDestine. It states that Marvel UK editor Paul Neary, while working within standard Marvel policy, offered him absolute creative freedom and the highest possible production values, and that the book wasn't given enough support by the publisher. It omits to mention that one of the promises allegedly made to Davis was that the book's title would feature his name: Alan Davis' The Clandestine. If this promise was originally made, it directly contradicts Marvel policy, which states that on regular non creator-owned comics (i.e. not Epic books), creators' names cannot appear on the front cover. The release also claims that The ClanDestine was "pitched and priced as a top quality comic." I would add that it was priced as a bloody expensive comic. I think even the special promotional ClanDestine Preview Magazine (oops - no publisher support?) was cheaper. Further, the "high production values" appear distinctly mediocre compared to the production set-up already in place at many other books. Ghost Rider 2099, priced at $1.50 (a full dollar less than ClanDestine and launched several months beforehand), printed on white matt paper, features the

Art © Marvel Entertainment

skill of colourist Christie Scheele, with computer-operations by Heroic Age, and looks far, far better.

Someone, somewhere, was wither misleading themselves - or getting misled.

From the Cam Kennedy interview in CW #35: "If the writer's getting royalties, he's gotta work!' Cam admits to disregarding the story on a regular basis." Listen, sunshine, until the writer's put marks down on paper, you don't have a fucking job. Don't begrudge royalties to the person who actually keeps you in work. In comics, the writer is the only creative participant who has to break a blank piece of paper. The artist may be faced with a blank canvas at the start of a job, but he has the script in front of him. You don's send a builder out to construct a house, whatever his skill, without having an architect draw up a set of plans first. There. Now we can have a nice reasoned discussion as to who the most important creative participant in the collaborative operation of comics is. I'll give you a clue: Me.

I hate to join in on Image-bashing because it's gotten boring and doesn't always attract the best class of person, but I've just read some article declaring that Rob Liefeld has hired Kurt Busiek to write Youngblood: Year One, which Liefeld will be painting. Christ! Liefeld's very own Marvels. With a title that, for the millionth time, apes Frank Miller's Batman: Year One. I used to have a certain amount of time for the Image boys. Sure, they did fairly derivative superhero work, but at least they were doing it for themselves. But this appears to hold all the hallmarks of utter creative bankruptcy. And I think that's very sad. I liked the idea of seven comic book artists playing the megacorps at their own game and winning. They've done some useful things for the industry, like driving up production values (they pioneered workable computer colouring). They did some dim things too, but everyone's allowed to make mistakes, and the seven were, after all, growing up in public. Now, their market share is plummeting, and Rob Liefeld's single book in the Top Fifty is quite dramatically outsold by a book I'm writing, for God's sake. And I think a few more people have heard of Liefeld and the astonishingly dreadful Stephen Platt, the team in that book, than they have me. This little fact should be ringing alarm bells in Mr. Liefeld's head right about now. But if he's serious about doing something called Youngblood: Year One, I imagine he can't hear that ringing over the other, louder sounds in his belfry.

Finally, the last press notice to grab my attention was the suggestion that Marvel UK may again be gearing up to produce comics for the 'boy's adventure' market, and thence again to the Direct Sales market. The new president of Marvel UK is a man called Michael Hobson. Marvel US's Marketing Director, Sven Larson, had nothing but good words for Hobson when I saw him in October. According to Sven, who has a disturbing habit of telling the truth, Hobson's a very bright, incisive man. Therefore, if Mr. Hobson's listening, and if the company's serious about producing 'mainstream' comics again, a small note for him to consider:

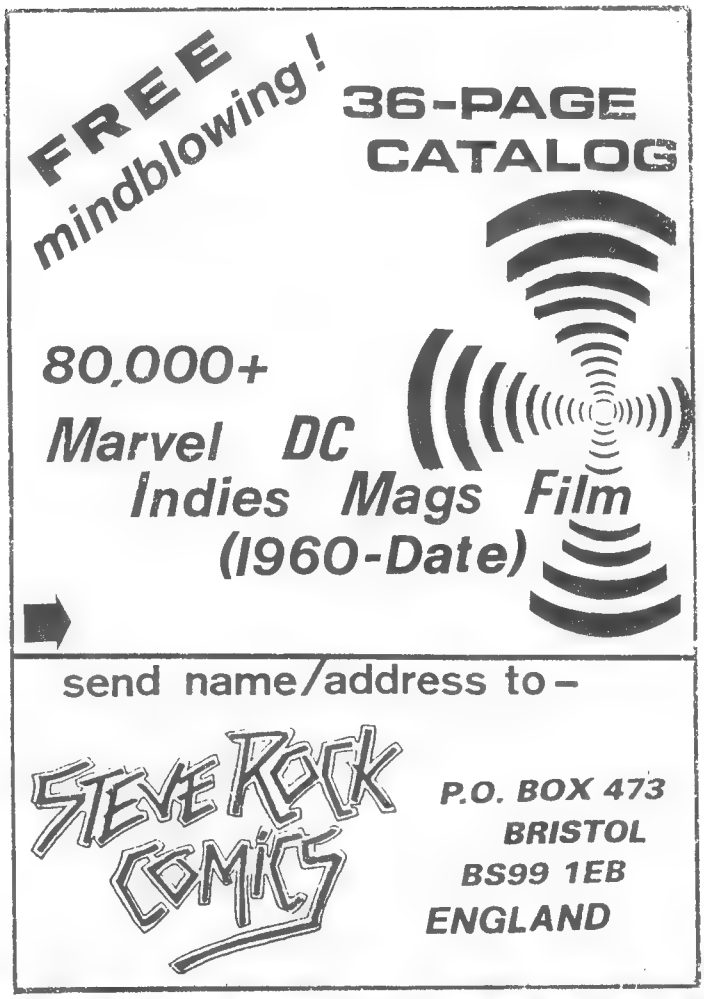
During Marvel UK's last assault on the Direct Sales market, one very simple mistake was made that utterly doomed them. Marvel UK had money. They had money enough to go to the best working writers in our country at the time - Jamie Delano, Garth Ennis, Grant Morrison, Nick Abadzis, John Smith, and the list goes on - and say: "Listen, why don't you create some really original superheroes? We'll pay you in pounds instead of dollars! No more pissing about with the exchange rates! Yeah, we'll own the work - you know that going in, right? - but we'll offer you the standard Marvel US flat fee for new character creation as compensation. People would just have to sit up and take notice with people like you involved! How about it?"

Not all of them would have agreed, I'm sure. But Jamie Delano worked for Marvel UK before. So has Grant Morrison. And Nick Abadzis. Even Bryan Talbot appreciates the worth of doing a spot of work-for-hire from time to time - it puts your name about and it puts a bit of money in the bin. And God knows it doesn't seem to take much to wrest people away from 2000AD. As Mike McMahon once commented in print: "offer (2000AD creators) an extra fiver to go with you and they will because working conditions will immediately be better,"

However, Marvel UK did not do this. They hired Marvel UK staffers to write their comics. Editors, mostly. Sometimes Marvel UK magazine editors with no previous comics writing credits. Presumably these people were being paid the same rates as were offered to freelancers. Otherwise several Marvel UK editors, towards the end of the Direct-aimed period, would have quit their jobs to go freelance - for Marvel UK. The new character creation fees did get paid out, most infamously to an editor who created four new characters, carrying an ongoing title each, and assigned friends to write them for him so that he could also pick up the special character-creator royalty paid out with all four books every single new issue.

Please, please. For God's sake hire writers. Even bloody Rob Liefeld knows to do that. CW

WARREN ELLIS is still waiting to receive his royalties on the Tundra UK black-and-white graphic novel Sugarvirus, which he was told sold in excess of 15,000 and therefore must have exceeded breakeven because Lazarus Churchyard's breakeven was 9,000 and that was painted colour on glossy paper and only eight pages shorter. Perhaps Mr. Eastman would like to reply to my letter of December 1993 now.



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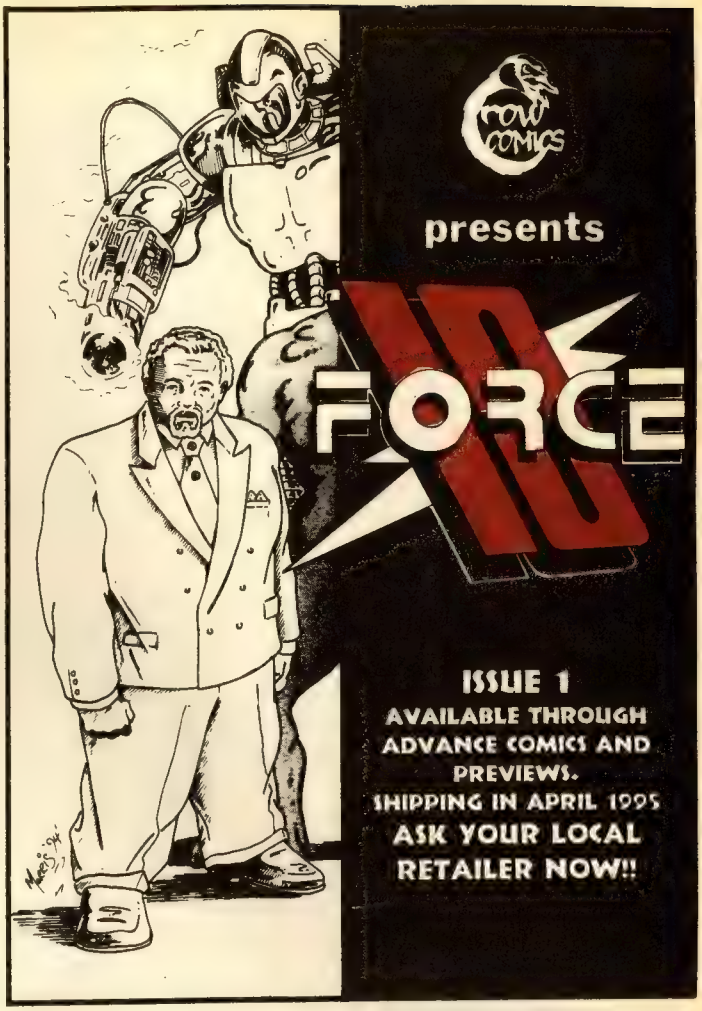

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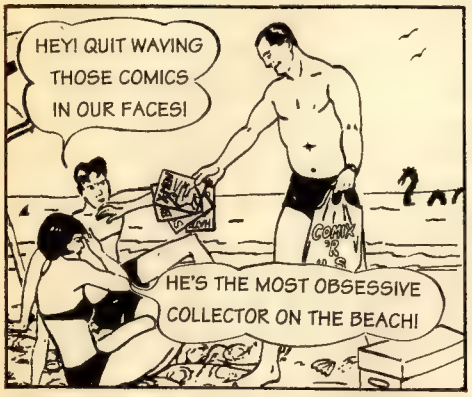

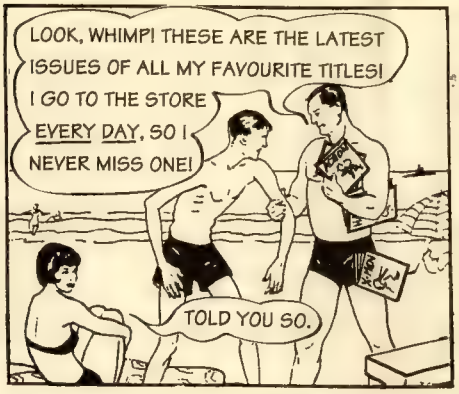

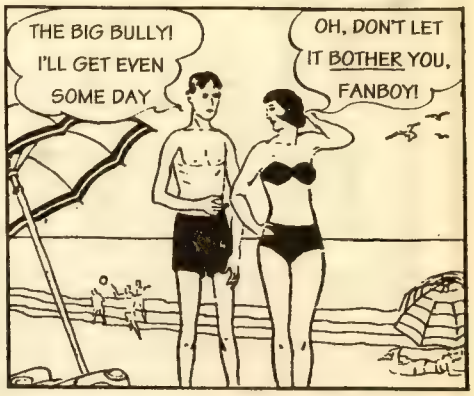

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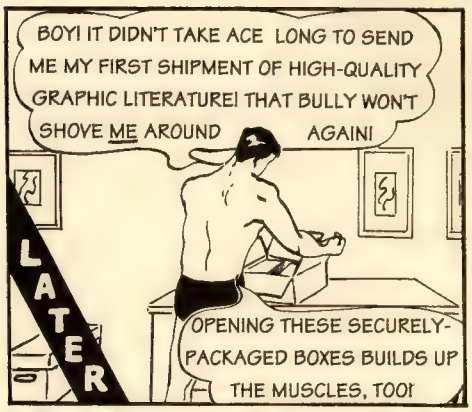
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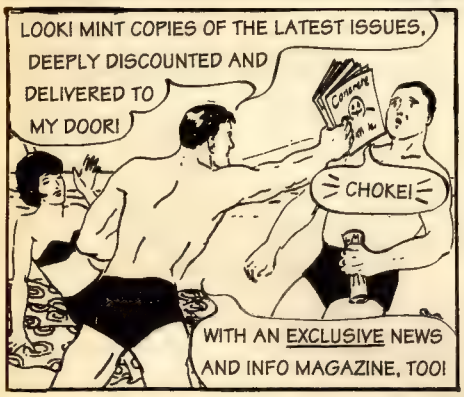
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Hi Folks!! Nineteen ninety five!! Only five years to the millennium!! Wowch!! Will the famous British weekly 2000AD still be around (I predict: only if the Stallone movie is a mega smash) and if so what will its new title be: answers on a postcard to Gutenberghus, not us, yep, the illustrious Judge Dredd is now owned by the Danes.
DC in the USA produce two Dredd titles under licence which have been freely available in the UK. Up to now that is; the most recent distributor catalog solicitations from the States specify that both Judge Dredd and Legends of the Law are available for sale in the continental USA and Canada only.
Want another prediction. OK! I reckon that with UK sales removed from the print runs J.D. and L.O.T. Law won't last more than another 4 or 5 issues. So it looks like another icon crashes against the barrier of bureaucratic contractual lawyerese.
At The Warehouse we still have Dredd 1, 2 and 3 from DC and will add others when, as and if, they come our way. Get them while they're hot lads and lassies. *We* won't be increasing the price. In fact, as usual, some of our prices have, remarkably for this day and age, come down again, and when you add in some of the specials that we make available to our regular customers, it certainly makes sense to shop at The Warehouse. (God, I'm starting to sound like a full blown boring hucksters commercial, we can't have that). What we do have is well over half a million books for your reading pleasure, so pick up paper and pen, then write or telephone to unveil an oasis of reading pleasure just for you. Come on in the water's lovely!
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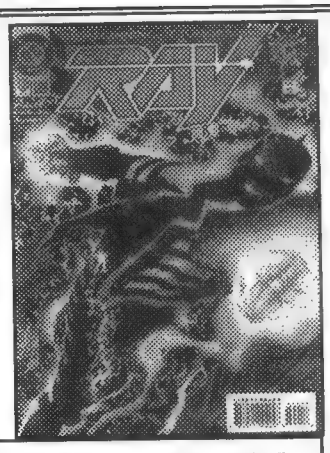

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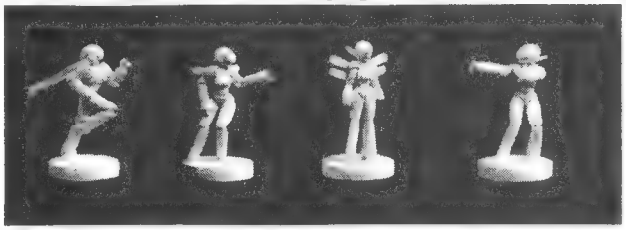

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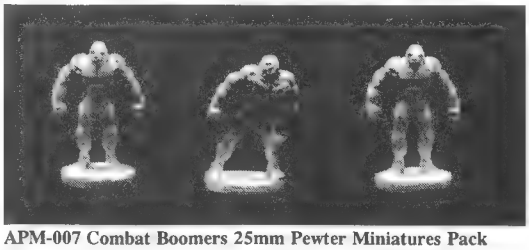

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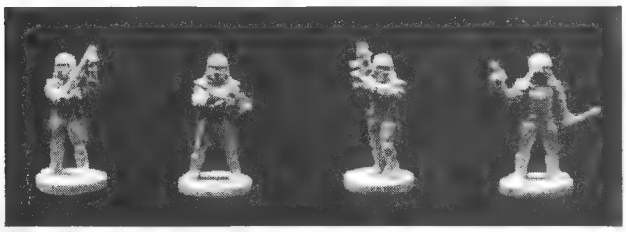

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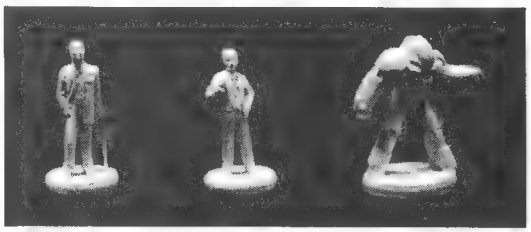

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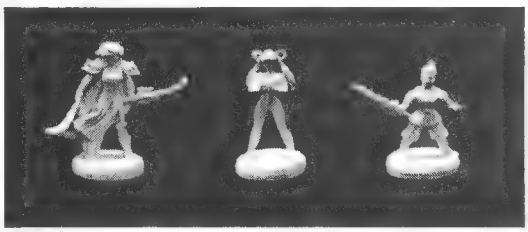

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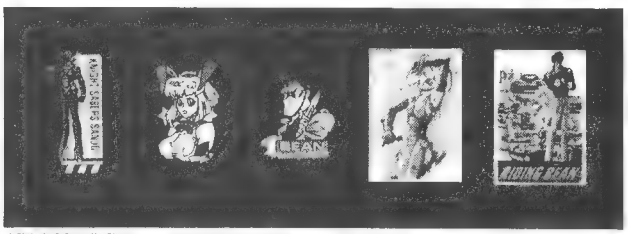

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MANGAKA

JONATHAN CLEMENTS EXPLORES THE POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLDS OF KATSUHIRO OTOMO, WRITER, ARTIST AND DIRECTOR OF *AKIRA*

The Japanese word for the modern generation of teenagers is* shinjinrui, *new breed. These are the kids who have grown up in an affluent Japan, who have not suffered the hardships of their elders. They are the children who rioted, unsuccessfully, for reform in the late 1960s, and today, they are the children who read Katsuhiro Otomo's comics.

***Today, Otomo is almost as famous in the West as he is in the East. Thousands of British teenagers read the serialisation of* Akira *every month in* Manga Mania, *and Otomo's popularity has now been sealed with the release of three graphic novels from Mandarin/Equinox this January. Included in the package is the first volume of the collected* Akira, *and two other works,* Domu *and* Memories.**

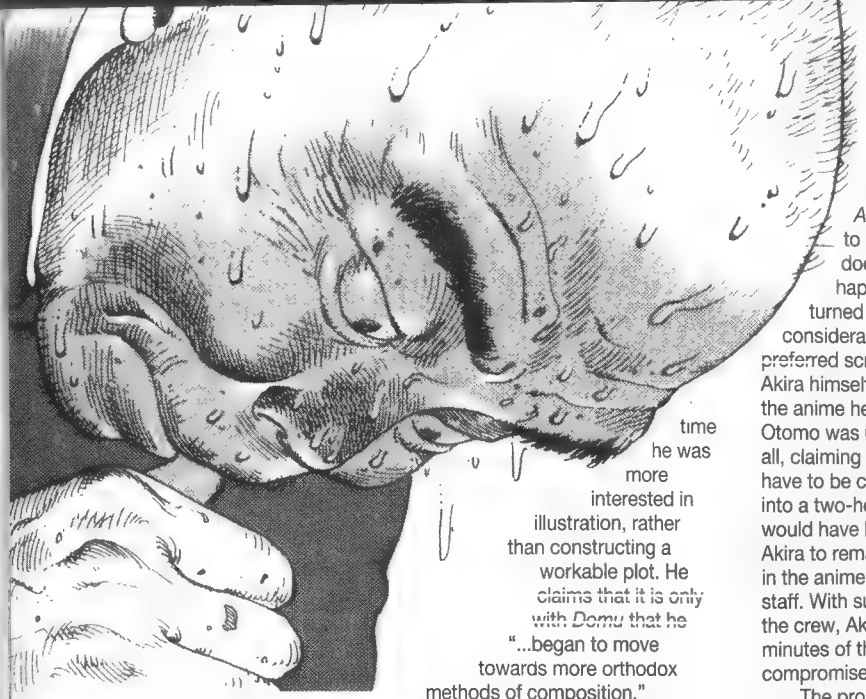
Otomo is too old to be a genuine 'new breed'. He was born in 1954 in Miyagi Prefecture, at the northern end of Japan's main island, and never bothered with the standard university or college. Instead he went to Tokyo to seek his fortune, and in time became a *mangaka*, or comic artist. He had his first big break with *Manga Action*, a monthly comic digest popular with the student readership, and made his meteoric rise to fame with the *Twilight Zone*-inspired 'Fireball'. This short SF comic, which Otomo never truly finished, makes its first appearance in the UK this month, as part of the *Memories* anthology.

Unlike the other famous manga guru of the 1980s, Masamune Shirow, Otomo is not a recluse. Even though he is a public figure, information on him remains scarce, at least in the English language. This article is based upon an interview conducted in Japanese between Otomo and the two leading lights of Equinox Publishing, Michael Bennent and Dick Jude.

Otomo gives the impression of a man dazed by his success, who can't quite grasp why others should find his work so interesting. He is reluctant to admit that he has done anything special, and seems mildly embarrassed when talk turns to his many accolades. Not only did *Domu* win the coveted award of the SF writers of Japan, it was the first comic to do so, and yet when pressed on this subject by Bennent and Jude, Otomo would only admit "surprise".

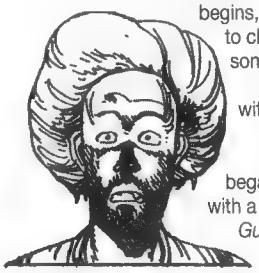
He is also reluctant to discuss the deeper implications of his works, claiming never to have had any political beliefs, even though Akira deals with nuclear war and imperialism, *Roujin-Z* with scientific ethics, and *World Apartment Horror* with urban desolation. All three are deeply concerned with political corruption, but Otomo remains adamant that he has never had any political axe to grind.

His debut came in 1973, with the publication in Manga Action of 'Gunshot', a comic version of Prospero Merimee's *Mateo Falcon*. Otomo is rather dismissive of his early stories, claiming that at the



time he was more interested in illustration, rather than constructing a workable plot. He claims that it is only with *Domu* that he "...began to move towards more orthodox methods of composition."

Domu follows a pattern that can he seen in many other works by Otomo. Michael Bennent describes it as a "Hitchcock thriller", and there are certainly many things that it shares with the master of suspense. The story involves a series of suspicious deaths at an apartment block, which turn out to have been caused by a covetous old man using psychic powers to force his victims to commit suicide. Matters come to a head when a new family moves into the block, along with their telepathic daughter, who is the only one who can see the murderer at work. The fight between the old man and the young girl begins, and a young police officer has to clear up the mess and try to find some way of proving the case.



It is Otomo's involvement with other media that have probably brought him the most fame abroad. He first began tinkering with film in 1983, with a 16mm effort entitled *Bring Us Guns*. Once again, this appears to be a part of his past that he finds embarrassing, and he has done his best to suppress the film's availability today.

One film he could never hope to suppress is *Akira*, the ground-breaking animated adaptation of his manga that almost single-handedly kickstarted the anime scene in many parts of the world. Luckily, Otomo does not seem to be too ashamed of it. He recounts how, in the early 1980s, he found work as a character designer on an anime for the media giant Kadokawa. During this time, he met a large number of workers in the field, most of whom expressed considerable dissatisfaction with their conditions. When the time came to make the anime adaptation of *Akira*, Otomo allowed many of his staff free reign.

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The anime adaptation closed a neat circle for Otomo, who had based his ideas for the original manga on TV cartoons he remembered from his youth. "Akira is rooted in the old-style robot shows like *Tetsujin 28* that I watched when I was younger. When I actually drew it I was able to supply my own characters and spin my own story. You'd think an author would be able to control what he writes, but I don't have much choice about it!"

When Otomo discusses *Akira* the anime, it is necessary to read between the lines. He does not seem completely happy about the way the film turned out, and apparently faced considerable opposition to his preferred script. In the manga version, Akira himself is a major character, but in the anime he only enters during the finale. Otomo was unwilling for him to appear at all, claiming that certain things would have to be cut for the manga story to fit into a two-hour cartoon. He thought it would have been more interesting for Akira to remain a shadowy figure, unseen in the anime, but was outvoted by the staff. With such a disagreement among, the crew, Akira's entrance in the last few minutes of the film seems to have been a compromise that pleased nobody.

The production was hideously expensive, and took much longer than most of its contemporaries, but the end result was stunning. Unfortunately, as far as most Japanese financiers were concerned, a stunning end product was not a justification for the huge budget, and Otomo reports "there has not been a flood of further offers."

The imagination, hard work and, yes, money that went into *Akira* undoubtedly shows on the screen. *Akira* opened a lot of doors for anime in the West, but other works have tended to suffer in comparison. Some researchers talk of an 'Akira Barrier', whereby nothing quite lives up to the dynamism of the original. Even now, three years after they released *Akira*, the UK's Manga Video are still trying to sell other anime with *Akira* as a benchmark. The adverts proclaim a work is the 'best...since *Akira*', but nothing quite compares.

Otomo himself took a backward step with the anime follow-up, *Roujin-Z*. This thoughtful, politically-aware diatribe about the plight of the elderly boasts a powerful script that is easily the equal of *Akira*, but suffers from an animation budget that is much lower. This will always lead to it being unfavourably compared with its illustrious predecessor; a pity since its message is much more understandable. Otomo's concern in *Roujin-Z* is the ageing society. In the early part of the next century, the elderly baby-boomers will gradually become more and more of a burden on their society, slowly crowding out the younger minority. Otomo's ideas for *Roujin-Z* germinated during a night out drinking with colleagues, when he was listening in on an argument about the death of the robot genre. "Someone said there was no way you could ever do anything new with robots. Then someone else said it might be good to combine a pretty young girl with a robot. Then someone pointed out that's already been done to death, hut no-one had done a robot and an old man. So I suddenly thought, 'Why don't we do all three?' The result was not only a thoughtful social commentary, but was also packed with dark humour. Otomo's supposition, that old people will have to fight for their dignity, is rendered particularly poignant in his use of minor characters, such as a ward full of retired hackers, succinctly reminding us that in the future, we will be the ones in need of care and attention.

It is unclear whether or not Otomo's partial withdrawal from the anime scene is due to an inability to secure the backing for a true successor to *Akira*, dissatisfaction with the genre, or simply that his interest lies in other media. Immediately after Akira, he began work on the live-action *World Apartment Horror*, about a haunted apartment block in Tokyo. Yet again, the allegedly apolitical Otomo deals with a very political subject. *World Apartment Horror* concerns a run-down building in Kichioji (coincidentally, this Tokyo district is also where his own Mash Room Studio is located). Local gangsters want to clear the site so they can sell it to unscrupulous developers, but the immigrant occupants put up a fight. When the gangsters show up to eject the immigrants, they are attacked by the building's guardian spirit.

World Apartment Horror, like *Akira* and *Roujin-Z*, is classic Otomo. We see a small, human-interest story in a troubled setting, that gradually swells into a cosmic, spiritual odyssey. Otomo's "troubled settings" have occasionally been post-holocaust, but he denies that any of his works are informed by any thought of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This

YOU'D THINK AN AUTHOR WOULD BE ABLE TO CONTROL WHAT HE WRITES, BUT I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHOICE ABOU

is perhaps the hardest of his statements to believe. Possibly, he is unwilling to admit the powerful effect that the war had on the Japanese psyche, or perhaps he is being modest once more, and does not want to heap pretensions of grandeur on his works.

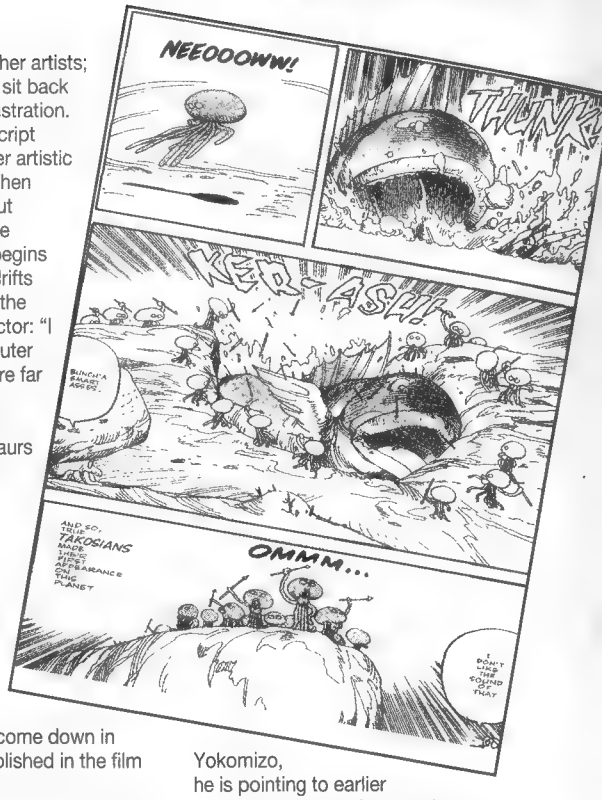
The grandeur, however, is there for the taking. *Akira* is loaded with signifiers for post-war Japan, especially the Japan of Otomo's teens. After "a new type of bomb" has wiped the slate clean, Japan, in the form of Neo-Tokyo, has been rebuilt at an incredible rate. Amid riots in the streets and cries of revolution, the corrupt government try to maintain a grip on power by any means possible. Some have seen a metaphor for nuclear power in the energy and mutative effects of Akira, but Otomo vigorously denies this, claiming: "I don't think that a consciousness of the 'nuclear experience' exists in any of my works."

Another common theme in Otomo's work is that of the human need for love. In *Roujin-Z*, the ancient Mr. Takizawa believes his robotic bed has been possessed by the spirit of his dead wife. His manic charge through the city is nothing more than an attempt to relive a blissful day at the seaside with his beloved. In *Memories*, one of Otomo's short stories in the collection of the same name, astronauts find a giant metal rose floating in space. Within it is the corpse of a woman, whose dying thought was remorse at failing to attend her lover's funeral. Obsessed with this last memory, the computers on her ship have constructed the metal rose around it, a touching monument to love eternal.

The *Memories* collection contains 14 other SF pieces by Otomo, spanning the seventies and early eighties. Two of the stories, along with a third that has not previously appeared, form the centre of Otomo's latest directorial foray, This too is called *Memories*.

Otomo's illustration alone is not particularly out of the ordinary. Like many of his contemporaries, he utilises a studio of 'helpers' to do the dirty work of backgrounds and shading. This is the cause of the draughtsman-like reality of architecture and machinery illustration throughout many of his comics. The characters themselves show an increasing maturity throughout the series of *Akira*, perhaps reflecting the author's own growing interest in the things he is drawing.

But it is in scripting his works that Otomo really shines, and maybe this is why he has worked on so many productions purely in a writing capacity. Both *World Apartment Horror* (the manga) and his more recent *Legend of Mother Sarah* were drawn by other artists; Otomo seems happy to sit back and let others do the illustration.



His interest in the script shows through whenever artistic works are discussed. When asked his thoughts about computer graphics in the animation industry, he begins on the point, but soon drifts back to a discussion of the role of the writer or director: "I myself have used computer graphics a bit, but they're far too expensive at the moment to use in large amounts. But the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park* were awesome! I loved the drama in the film. I thought the suspense was very well handled, especially at certain moments like when the children were trying to get over the high-voltage fence." And computer graphics? "Well, these things will come down in price once they're established in the film business."

When it comes to writing the stories themselves, Otomo mentions a director and a writer as his main heroes: "My initial influence came from the plots in the films of Akira Kurosawa. Those and the early novels by Seishi Yokomizo." In the case of Kurosawa, Otomo seems most intrigued by the ordering of plot, and the ways it can be rearranged to add emphasis, as seen in films such as *Rashomon*. Thus, in Otomo's own work, we only see the early years of Akira's protagonists at the *end* of the anime.

When it comes to novels, Otomo has picked a very revealing idol. Yokomizo is best known in Japan for *After 26 Million Years*, an SF tale along the lines of Stapledon's *Last and First Men*, in which a time traveller from the Japan of 1941 journeys far into the future. He encounters the 'new breeds' of humanity, changeling creatures with wings and atrophied legs, or egg-laying hierarchies of insectoids. When Otomo's interest in Yokomizo is taken into account, his alleged 'nuclear' obsession becomes clearer. The key is change and adaptation themselves, rather than in relationship to the effects of a particular technology. Interestingly enough, Otomo is keen not to be identified as a 'cyberpunk' writer, claiming no relationship between *Akira* and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*. Many critics have assumed that Otomo is merely following in the wake of Western SF writers, but in his acknowledgement of Yokomizo, he is pointing to earlier Japanese sources that pre-date cyberpunk by several decades. Another factor separating *Akira* from *Neuromancer* is that while both were published in the same year, 1984, the latter was not translated into Japanese until 1985. So while the American readers of *Akira* (translated into English in 1988) may have thought it derivative of Gibson, Japanese readers of Neuromancer were equally likely to find it derivative of Otomo!

Time and again, Otomo looks at how human beings may be forced to adapt to new conditions, not only nuclear aftermath, but also the ageing process, changes in society, and the need to turn to religion under extreme pressure. If we look at Otomo's works from that perspective, the themes that run through so many of them make a lot more sense. Otomo's worlds are rooted deeply in his culture, not only in terms of their subject matter, but in terms of the predecessors that inspired him. He may be writing for Japan's new breed, but his message has been informed by Japan's old guard. Sometimes it is all too easy to forget that he wrote these comics in Japanese, for an audience with Japanese sensibilities. It is a tribute to his storytelling ability that the British 'new breed' find him just as exciting. CW

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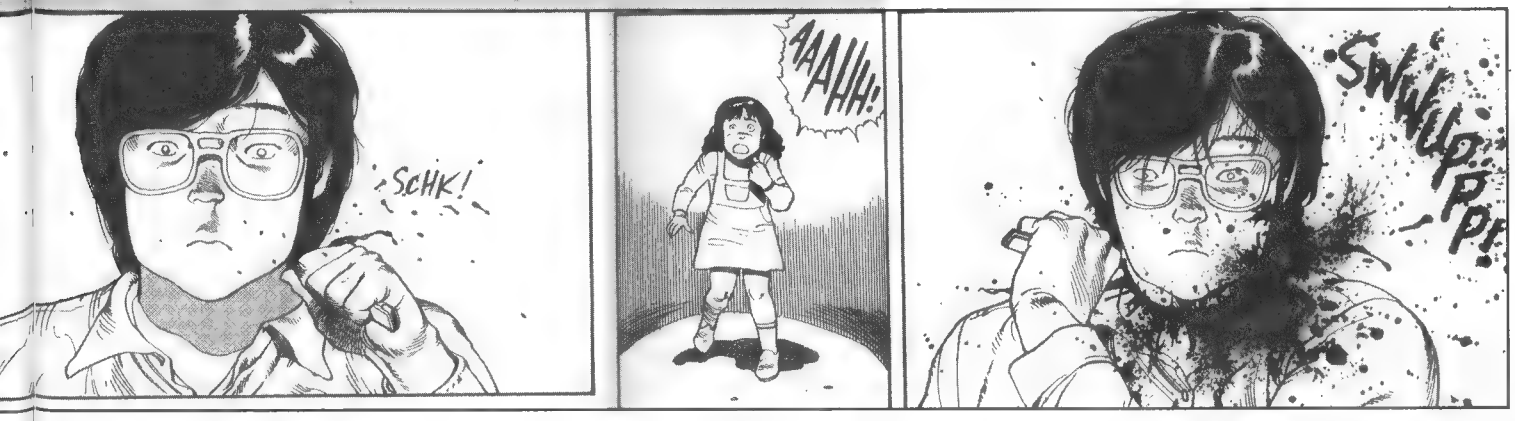


TWILIGH
LAST GLEA

MARVEL'S NEW MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE, MARK GRUENWALD, REVEALS THE DAWNING OF A NEW ERA TO ALAN WOOLACOOMBE

It's the interviewer's ultimate nightmare: five minutes into a telephone interview with Marvel executive editor and Captain America scribe Mark Gruenwald, I notice the reels of the tape are motionless. I tap them, and one moves briefly, pulling the tape taut before... it snaps. Frantically I fumble for a spare tape, hoping I don't miss too much and that my subject won't suspect and use it as an excuse to curtail the interview. If Mark Gruenwald does suspect, however, he gives no sign... Mind you, the kingpin of the Marvel Classics arm of the newly subdivided Marvel empire sounds an agreeable cove who wouldn't be fazed by such a mishap. I'm the one whose concentration is shot...

Let's start at the beginning: Mark Gruenwald has been a mover and shaker in the Marvel Universe for quite a few years now, firstly as editor then writer on *Captain America* (since 1983) and *Quasar*, more recently as an executive editor. Now, after Marvel's latest bout of corporate musical chairs, lo!, he is grand poobah of one of the five semi-autonomous branches where once there stood but one mighty trunk *(Hail Hydra! Immortal Hydra! Cut off an arm and five more shall take its place...) (- Get a grip, Woollcombe! - ed.)*. Now Mark Gruenwald is in charge of "what they're calling the Marvel Classic Super-Heroes line - all the Lee-Kirby stuff. That's *The Avengers, Cap, Thor, Fantastic Four, Fantastic Force, Force Works, Iron Man, Quasar, War Machine, Silver Surfer, Thunderstryke* - and I'm the US coordinator of [Alan Davis's] *The Clan Destine*. I do almost all the Stan [Lee] and Jack [Kirby] stuff except *X-Men*. and *Spider-Man*."

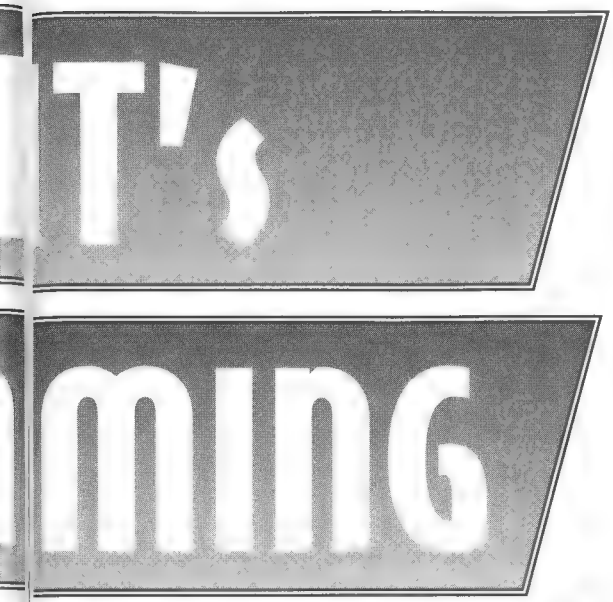
Classic is the right word for it, and who wouldn't want to control the destinies of most of Marvel's biggest names from the Silver Age barring arachnids and mutants? Certainly not Mr G: "It's my favourite bit of the entire Marvel Universe - if I could completely choose whatever I wanted, this is what I want." But if he was already one of Marvel's three *executive editors* (whatever that might have been) and they're abolishing the topdog editor-in-chief role, how does his new job differ from his old one? "Six months ago I had a little control over everything. Now, as a sub-editor-in-chief, I got a whole lot of control over a little thing, and the little thing is approximately one fifth of the entire Marvel line."

Er, yes. Maybe we'll get back to you on that... Anyway, job descriptions aside, what are your plans for your province of the Marvel empire? "I have got four quadrants of my universe: *The Avengers, Fantastic Four, Force Works* and cosmic powers - that's *Silver Surfer* and *Starmasters* [- Who?]. What I basically want to do is to bring them together and coordinate them as well as The *X-Men* are doing it. The *X-Men* books read like they're in the same section of the Universe, with all of them equally important and coordinated. I don't think this has been the case for years between the *Avengers* titles or even between the *Fantastic Four* and the quarterly book [*Fantastic Four*] *Unlimited*. The one thing I'm going to bring to it is greater coordination - that's my direction from the getgo. [It's] not that there are going to be mass crossovers all the time, it's just that you're going to know they're all playing in the same section of the [Marvel] Universe and something that happens in one book is going to affect something in another book."

Half expecting a Tom DeFalco-style runaround, Gruenwald's candour takes me aback. Now if only I can get him to admit that the writing on some of these books is not exactly up to scratch... Banishing such mean thoughts, I lure him into a brief discussion on Marvel's ex-editor-in-chief's planned activities (freelancing for sure, advising possibly) before turning to Marvel's other rumoured redundancies. "We are told we are going to be *right-sizing*" - he begins to laugh at the appalling business jargon he has just come out with - "I didn't make this up, this is an American term! We've been told from lots of different sources, particularly retailers and distributors, that Marvel puts out too many titles, and maybe they were justified in saying that when we had all that Marvel UK and Epic stuff and some of the Marvel stuff. Now we don't do very much Epic and the UK stuff is mostly gone..." At this point the tape

gives out, saving him from indiscreet admissions along the lines of *Now we've cut the deadwood from our titles, we've got to do the same with our staff*. I like his lack of company hyperbole.

With the tape rolling again, I ask about his own writing career. Eleven-plus years on one title is a long stretch by anyone's reckoning, but will his new elevation mean he no longer has the time to write? 'Fraid so: "My last issue of *Captain America* will be the July one." And have we seen the last of him on *Quasar*, the cosmic Avenger whose series he wrote from the beginning? "Curiously enough, I've got a series that is somewhat of a sequel to Quasar, in that he is in it. It's a cosmic team called *Starmasters*, featuring the Silver Surfer, Quasar, Beta Ray Bill (from the *Thor* storyline) and some others, of whom the best-known is Tana Nile [another Thor alien]. A number of those get together. But I will only be writing the first four issues of that because once again it's under my jurisdiction as editor-in-chief and I don't want to write for me - I've taken me off that one too! I don't know what I'm doing beyond that, so this assignment is the last one."



Art © Marvel Entertainment

Re: Cap

Yes, yes, but what about Captain America, whom Mark Gruenwald has been writing since 1983 and who has been published since 1941? Marvel's third oldest hero in publishing terms after Namor the Sub-Mariner and the original (android) Human Torch, is seeing in his 54th year by becoming totally paralyzed. Why now? There isn't an anniversary coming up, is there? "No, I just never thought of the storyline before," Mr. G. candidly confesses. "I suddenly realized that he hadn't been through any personal crises since issue #350, when he regained his identity and costume as Captain America.

For those of you not following the *Fighting Chance* storyline, the good captain's super-soldier serum (the World War II potion that turned Steve Rogers from scrawny army reject into the perfect human specimen) has deteriorated after decades of deeds of derring-do, leaving the Avenger unable to move a muscle - including his heart muscles. Worse, his girl-friend Rachel 'Diamondback' Leighton wrote him a Dear John letter (in exchange for the villainess Superia promising to come up with a cure for Cap). Oh, and Gruenwald, the writer who got him into this mess, is bidding adieu too ("As of issue #441, Mark [*The Flash*] Waid takes over")... The rat!

So what next? "Somehow they manage to get Cap's heart back on line through medical means," the rat continues, "but he can never move again. That's when Tony Stark [Iron Man] whips up for him an exo-skeleton, an armoured suit which does the moving for his body. So he is still immobile, he can barely move his mouth enough to [speak] and wink his eyes, but the suit responds to cybernetic commands and does everything for him. It's ironic in that, while Cap's body is at its weakest, he is actually operationally strongest. The suit has boot jets so he can fly, it's got enhanced strength, and it's got a number of offensive capacities that are not like the sorts of things that Iron Man has - they are just a different set of things which are more in keeping with him carrying a shield.

"My final issues are the armoured Cap stories. He knows that, at any point, his heart could give out and he wants to go out fighting and to get accomplished a lot of loose ends in his life." Cue Cap's most ideological opponents: Flag-Smasher, Super-Patriot (not ex-girlfriend Bernie's ex, after all) and of course Cap's nemesis, the Red Skull. "Behind the scenes, the Red Skull has reacquired the Cosmic Cube and is now a world-class power level supervillain again. He realizes what is happening to Captain America and wants to exploit it, and this will also cross over into *The Avengers* in late fall."

There is a summer *Avengers* crossover as well, "a two-issue storyline that has to do with A.I.M. and Modam, Modok and the Super-Adaptoid. It's a fairly big deal storyline with a lot of guest stars in it and Nick Fury is going to be in the background during some of it." And better news is to follow, with the return of Rachel: "She comes back in the A.I.M. Island storyline. She has thrown her lot in with Superia and Superia does succeed in coming up with a cure for Cap, it can be revealed!" Can Gruenwald really be revealing all this? Surely there must be a cloud to all this silver lining... There is: "However, whether Cap takes the cure, or has the opportunity to take it, is another matter..."

Now *that* sounds more like Marvel... CW

THE AGE OF APOCA

and a presence that would stop the gods to attention. And they the courage to approach him.
...is APOCALYPSE, ...ster of America...
...nd soon... ...e world.
THERE WILL BE TIME LATER TO... DEAL WITH MICHAEL'S LAPSE IN JUDGEMENT.
WE WILL FIND HIM... AS WE SIFT THROUGH THE ASHES OF THE EARTH.

PHIL HALL DISCOVERS MARVEL'S MUTANTS INDULGING IN SOME IMAGINARY ANTICS AFTER THE DEATH OF CHARLES XAVIER

Art © Marvel Entertainment

To non-comic fans, the X-Men do just really mean a lot. Until earlier this year, most people would probably never have heard of them. *X-Men: The Animated Series* was a phenomenon restricted to the other side of the Atlantic ocean. To most people the X-men could have been a group of sexually deviant pre-Eighties film makers, or even former people.

In an alternate past reality, one where there wasn't an X-Men animated series and a place where Roy Castle hadn't died, we might have seen the X-Men achieve their byte of fame - on an edition of *Record Breakers* - as the biggest selling comic book in the western world.

In an alternate present reality, the X-Men might not have been as hot as they currently are.

In an alternative future reality, the X-Men probably wouldn't be recognisable to its legion of fans and readers...

From humble beginnings, the X-Men have grown to represent a massive 11% of the total direct sales market. This fact alone says more for the concept of the comic than a Chris Claremont, John Byrne, Jim Lee or a Rob Liefeld can. The X-Men reside above any single creator or group of creators. They represent in a comic everything that Marvel - the Corporation - represents in real life.

So, one wonders why Marvel, X-Chief Bob Harras and a plethora of marketing men are playing with a concept that fans don't ever seem to tire of.

Starting in January, nothing you've ever read will be true..

Especially when you consider that many fans who have stuck with the books through thick and thin may decide that January is as good a time as any to call it a day and become engrossed in some other comic series.

Also, just when DC has had a house cleaning with *Zero Hour*, Marvel could well be upsetting its own applecart by tampering with well-documented Marvel law. If you alter the past, you just create an alternative reality. Marvel has hopefully overcome this problem, as fans of the X-Men are the most continuity minded people in the world. In fact, this storyline could well be the exercise Marvel needs to house clean its own future, The anomaly of time in comics has become

a paradox.

For the benefit of those of you who came in late...The X-Men started in [illegible] September 1963, on a bi-monthly schedule from Marvel's relatively new and very innovative House of Ideas. Originally to be titled *Mutants*, then-[illegible] Martin Goodman told writer Stan Lee that he felt the title would be off putting to the general comics' readership and a name change was in order. The team was named after the team's titular head and the X-Men were born.

The book was by no means a success and co-creator and artist Jack Kirby moved on after a dozen or so

LYPSE

"...WHICH MEANS THAT YOU'RE ALL FROM THE FUTURE!"
THE PAST!
LILANDRA, HOW CAN EVENTS OCCURRING--EXCUSE ME, WHICH HAVE OCCURRED--BACK THEN...
...HAVE SUCH A PAST EFFECT ON THE MUTANT CRYSTAL IN THE PRESENT?
THE SPECIFIC DETAILS STILL ELUDE THE CRYSTAL'S APPOINTED NEXUS GUARD, CHARLES--
--BUT I DO KNOW WE HAVE LOST COMMUNICATIONS LINKS WITH SEVERAL OUTPOSTS ACROSS THE SHI'AR IMPERIUM!
SOME KIND OF DEMATERIALIZATION WAVE IS DEVOURING ENTIRE STAR SYSTEMS THROUGHOUT THE UNIVERSE--
--AND AFTER THE WAVE WASHES OVER THEM, IT IS AS IF THEY SIMPLY CEASE TO EXIST!
BUT THAT WOULD MEAN--
--MY X-MEN FAILED IN THE PAST--
AND THEIR FAILURE THEN IS CAUSING THE END OF ALL REALITY NOW?
IT ALWAYS HAS BEEN, FOR US, CHARLES.
BUT SADLY, THAT IS A WEIGHT WE ARE/WERE TO BEAR, ISN'T IT?
HOW SAD THEN...THAT WE DIE AS WE WERE FORCED TO LIVE...
...TOGETHER IN SPIRIT, YET STILL LIGHT YEARS APART...
SUCH A BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY. IT'S SO UNFAIR, LIL...

XAVIER HAD A DREAM... A VISION OF RACIAL UNITY.
WITH HIS DYING BREATH, HE ENTRUSTED THE DELIVERANCE OF HIS DREAM TO ME.
TWENTY YEARS LATER, I IMAGINE HIM LOOKING DOWN FROM THE HEAVENS AT WHAT HIS WORLD HAS BECOME...

[illegible]. Arguably less talented Marvel freelancers were brought in to produce the title. The strangest teens of all remained unsuccessful and after various attempts to stimulate interest and sales - solo adventures, splitting the team up, new costumes, the death of Professor Xavier and back-up origin strips - the writing was on the wall. Even after the arrival of Jim Sterenko and later the critically acclaimed Roy Thomas and Neal Adams, the book became a major Marvel casualty in March 1970.

In August 1975, the then Editor-in-Chief at Marvel, Len Wein, made an unprecedented decision in the wake of massive cutbacks in the comics industry to revamp and return the X-Men to Marvel mythos.

The X-Men had continued to be published as a reprint comic since December 1970; during the five years without new stories, various members of the team went off and did their own thing. The Beast starred in his own solo adventure series in *Amazing Adventures* which saw him transformed from the misanthropic scientist into a blue, furry and cuddly motormouth and later become one of the most popular Avengers of all time, Iceman and Angel were to become part of a San

Francisco-based superteam called *The Champions*, and Professor X (he faked his own death to increase sales), Cyclops and Marvel Girl became embroiled in what is arguably Marvel's first multi-comic crossover involving a terrorist organisation called the Secret Empire. Havok and Polaris both tangled with the Hulk thanks to Len Wein and Wein seemed to use the Hulk as a catalyst for events on the horizon...

ALPHA

In the space of twelve to eighteen months, Len Wein - while writing the green-skinned behemoth - had stories involving The Beast, Juggernaut, Havok and Polaris, Marvel Girl, Cyclops and Professor X, and crowned it all off with the first appearance of the most successful X-Man ever, Wolverine.

In the summer of 1975, *Giant-Sized X-Men #1* appeared. Compared to today's overhype and massive marketing promotions, this first new X-Men comic for five years arrived unheralded and largely ignored.

As well as the key members from the original 66 issue run, we were introduced to new mutants, colourful and unfamiliar: only Wolverine was a familiar face. At the end of this all New X-Men's first mission all but one of the founding members elected to remain - and they didn't spin off in their own book!

An almost unrecognisable team under the auspices of a new writer Chris Claremont and long time DC inspiring Dave Cockrum began weaving tales that eclipsed much of the rest of the Marvel line. Long before the likes of Frank Miller, Alan Moore and Grant Morrison pushed the boundaries of comic story telling, Chris Claremont was busily building one of the biggest followings in comics. Some of the stories took years to complete, even in this new world of five minute attention spans. Phoenix was the first long term endeavour, transforming Jean Grey, the team's Invisible Girl, into a being far more powerful that rival DC's Superman; Claremont was dealing with the feelings of teammates who had been rendered moot by the presence of a God.

Claremont and John Byrne then crowned off a most successful run on the title with the *Dark Phoenix Saga*, a story that sent ripples through the whole of the comics' community. This was a biggy, a story which any new reader of the title should investigate. If told today, it would probably take over a year to build up to and spin off into several specials and deluxe editions.

In short, the X-Men, circa late 1970s, was one of the most innovative concepts in comics' history.

Over the last five years, the new *X-Men #1* achieved the distinction of being the biggest selling comic in the western world and the entire X-Men comics line is equivalent to Image, Valiant and Dark Horse in combined sales. So why change it all for the sake of an alternative crossover - a giant *What If?* story?

By now it's common knowledge to any Marvel aficionados that the new X-Books have surpassed all expectations. They have obtained 9 of the top 10 positions in the direct market. They have, in the words of Arthur Dent, had a nice little earner. But what is actually going to happen?

MUTANTS MUTATING

All the titles we have grown familiar with are changing names and numbering:

The Uncanny X-Men becomes **The Mutants: The Astonishing X-Men**

Cable becomes **X-Man**

X-Factor becomes **Factor-X**

Generation X becomes **The Mutants: Generation Next**

Wolverine becomes **Weapon X**

X-Men becomes **The Mutants: The Amazing X-Men**

Excalibur becomes **X-Calibre**

X-Force becomes **Gambit and the X-Ternals**

X-Men Unlimited becomes **X-Men Chronicles**

To compliment these new four-issue mini-series, Marvel is also releasing a number of specials. **X-Men Alpha** is the prologue to the story, **The Apocalypse Files** is a look at the new mutant order through the eyes of the century-spanning villain Apocalypse; **X-Universe** is a two-issue prestige series exploring the lives of other Marvel heroes during this altered reality; the series concludes in **X-Men Omega** which, hopefully, returns things to as close to normal as they ever were before the *Age of Apocalypse* began.

Readers of the titles will already be aware of the return of Professor Xavier's multi-faceted, ultra-powerful son, Legion, and his new twisted perspective. They will also be aware that several X-Men have returned to the past as Legion attempts to wipe the slate clean and change the future of mankind.

Legion in the confused state has discovered that he has the power to alter the Marvel Universe in any way without creating an alternative reality. He decides that Magneto is the

root of all his father's problems and vows to kill the young Eric Magnus Lenshur (Magneto). But instead of killing Magneto, his father is killed instead. This causes the entire history of the X-Men as we know it to change and ushers in a new era where the lines between the good and the evil are even closer knit.

The Age of Apocalypse will introduce you to characters you are familiar with - but some will be slightly or dramatically different. Instead of being the X-Men's arch-villain, Magneto will now lead a rag-tag band of mutant resistance fighters called the X-Men, after the dream which he and his long-dead friend Charles Xavier had dreamt.

Wolverine - the Weapon X - and his woman, the immensely powerful telepath Jean Grey, are renegades fighting in the name of peace against the ruler of the western world, Apocalypse and his master henchman, Mr Sinister.

Scott Summers, Cyclops, becomes the rebellious 'son' of Mr Sinister as he breaks away from his programming and dreams of a peaceful world where mutants live in peace instead of toiling in the slave pits and the breeding pens.

Gambit and his wife, cosmic outlaw and master thief Lila Cheyney, and their band of mutants have a slightly different agenda. Holding no allegiance to any team or faction, they choose to disrupt the relative calm of Apocalypse's rule by stealing important artefacts from the master of time. Their latest goal is the reality altering M'Kraan Crystal - potentially installing the writers' of the series continuity get out clause - which long-time X-Men readers will remember from John Byrne's debut in *Uncanny X-Men #108*.

Kitty Pryde and Colossus are the husband and wife team responsible for the training of the next generation of Magneto's X-Men, a team similar to the existing *Generation X*. Colossus races to save his sister, the not-dead-in-this-timeline Illyana, from the slave pits, unaware that his sister holds the key to restoring time back to how it was.

Nightcrawler is transformed into a darker, more sinister character according to Warren Ellis, writer of *X-Calibre*. "The nice thing about writing this title is that I can make them all bastards. Kurt (Nightcrawler) does a lot of creeping about in shadows and he learns that he can do particularly nasty things with his powers of teleportation: he can teleport bits of people." The Southend-based writer also plans to make some of the characters he's playing with totally unlike their 'real' counterparts. The Juggernaut, a man who in the current X- continuity hates Charles Xavier, is transformed into a meek and peaceful fellow who despises violence and wishes to lead a God-fearing life. "Juggernaut is a monk. X-Calibre ask him for his help but he refuses, so they push at him harder and harder in an effort to get him to fight and he has an aneurysm. He can't cope with being asked to play the hero and he dies."

Very nasty, but this is essentially what this X-Men crossover is all about, giving the writers a chance to have some fun with characters whose personalities and traits are carved in stone. A lot of the new characters introduced may well find their way in the continuing adventures of the *X-Men*, *Uncanny X-Men*, *X-Force*, *X-Factor*, etc. when the big storyline concludes, but they will not be related to this crossover. "They'll be given new origins, ones to fit into that continuity," says Warren.

OMEGA

So, despite all the fears of fans and devotees, it seems that Marvel are not changing the continuity of the most popular comics family. When asked what he plans for *Excalibur* were after the crossover, Warren says, "I'm keeping roughly the same team. There was some pressure on me to introduce some other mutants, but me and Suzanne (Caffney, his editor) resisted it. Kurt, Kitty, Megan and Douglocke are staying and they're joined by Pete Wisdom, a new British superhero." It appears that Captain Britain is no longer a member of the team? "Brian Braddock is joining Moira and Rory on the supporting cast. He's fed up with being a superhero and wants to get back to his first love, engineering. He'll be around to help out and work as a technician on Muir Island so he can stay shacked up with Megan.

"Despite all the hype and the uncertainty, it's just a huge crossover. A chance to tell some good stories and a lot more fun to write. With issue #87 of Excalibur it will be business as usual. As far as I know, this doesn't mean they'll be changing any of the continuity: at the end of *X-Men Omega* that Universe will cease to be."

But this is comics, and we all know that can mean an endless variety of possibilities. CW

PHIL HALL is the News Editor of *Comics International* and a semi-regular columnist for *Comic World*. He is also a confirmed out-of-the-closet X-Fan. Wanna make something out of it?

INTO THE 21

GRAHAM BLEATHMAN LOOKS BACK THIRTY YEARS TO THE 21st CENTURY...

With Gerry Anderson's STINGRAY • FIREBALL XL5 • SUPERCAR
TV CENTURY 21
ADVENTURE IN THE 21st CENTURY
7p
STINGRAY LOST!
FREE INSIDE! TOP SECRET CODE BOOK!
TITAN TERROR FISH ATTACKS WASP VESS
Steve Zodiac Dead?
CORGI MODEL CLU

© ITC Entertainments Group

"It's the 21st Century. You are sitting in the control cabin of Stingray. Next to you is Captain Troy Tempest. You are travelling at 600 knots.

You reach Marineville, and a supersonic helicopter transports you inland, swooping low over the metal roads, the fantastic buildings and cities of 2065. This is the world of TV21."

With those words, editor Alan Fennell introduced the readers of 1965 to the world of 2065, and the comic called *TV Century 21*. It was a world familiar to anyone with access to a TV set, and on the front cover of the first issue blazed the banner 'With Gerry Anderson's Stingray, Fireball XL5 and Supercar'.

If you bought *TV21* issue one on January 20th 1965, you probably knew exactly what those names meant. Only the night before, TV viewers in the Midlands bad seen an episode of Stingray, while in the North, it was broadcast that evening. London viewers would have to be content with a repeat of Fireball XL5.

As a spin off, *TV21* was a perfect complement to the TV shows. Posing as a newspaper of the future, with its tabloid-like front pages and its illusion of continuity, *TV21* gave the television characters a life beyond the TV screen. At a time when most viewers owned black and white TV sets, *TV21* literally put the characters into another dimension. Ron Embleton's Stingray was tasteful and robust, Frank Bellamy's Thunderbirds was at the forefront of British comics' design. Mike Noble's Fireball XL5 transformed the spacemen into the spiritual sons of the frontier heroes. Humans and spacecraft were depicted with the same mechanical precision. Explosions spat off the page. Space had a frosty depth.

TV21 was first published in 1965, but it's roots lay with *TV Comic*, where assistant editor Alan Fennell was providing comic strip adaptations of Gerry Anderson's *Four Feather Falls* and *Supercar*. At a time when many British strips were often heavily captioned to placate parents who thought "there wasn't enough reading" in comics, Fennell's work was finely balanced. There was enough verbal information to stop the reader getting bored, and the kind of visuals that kept the reader interested.

Anderson was impressed enough to ask him for scripts for his next series, Fireball XL5, and as the two got to know each other, so the concept of a comic based on the output of Anderson's AP Films began to emerge. By the time Stingray was on the air - with many episodes written by Fennell- a dummy of the proposed comic had been produced.

Called *Century 21* (also the original proposed title of Fireball XL5), it was hawked around Fleet Street until City Magazines, part of the *News of the World* empire, agreed to handle production and distribution. Another subsidiary, Eric Bemrose Ltd, would provide printing facilities.

In the final months of 1964, 'TV' had been added to Century 21's title, and most of the staff and freelancers were assembled. Dennis Hooper was recruited as Art Director, along with designer Peter Corri. Hooper also provided some scripts for various strips and collaborated with office manager Tod Sullivan on the covers. Sullivan also contributed scripts, notably for Secret Agent 21. Script editing was provided by Angus Allan, whose wife Gillian also edited the text features and front page news stories.

In terms of artists, Frank Bellamy was approached for Stingray but was still contracted to *Eagle*, so Dennis Hooper turned to Ron Embleton, who had previously drawn Biggles, Battleground, Colonel Pinto and Wulf the Briton for *Express Weekly*. Graham Coton provided artwork for Fireball XL5, but was replaced after six issues by Mike Noble, whose previous work had included The Lone Ranger for *TV Comic*.

Thanks to *TV21*'s connections with AP Films, Fennell didn't have to rely on publicity stills for his front

st CENTURY

pages. He could arrange with special effects supervisor Derek Meddings to have model shots set up to tie in with comic scripts. More often than not he could also use Stills Photographer Doug Luke's action shots of the TV episodes during production. Thus the Fireflash airliner, or the Sidewinder army vehicle could appear in a Stingray strip or on the cover, or Lady Penelope and Parker could appear in the comic nine months before their TV appearances, either in stills or drawn by Eric Eden.

Apart from The Daleks (drawn by Richard Jennings, Eric Eden and Ron Turner, and written by David Whittaker), the rest of the strips were in black and white. These included Supercar, by Bruno Marraffa and Toledano, Burke's Law and Secret Agent 21.

As TV21's 'host', Agent 21 occupied a two page feature in which readers' letters and photos were printed and toys offered as competition prizes. In issue 21, one of the pages was taken over by a comic strip drawn by Rab Hamilton. Combined with Sullivan's sparse narration, Hamilton's monochrome art evoked the mood of Le Carre fused with the gadgetry of James Bond. Set 'in the past' of the 2040's, the long running strip laid much of the groundwork for the world of the 21st century.

ATV finally broadcast *Thunderbirds* in September 1965. The following January, Frank Bellamy's strip commenced in TV21, replacing Lady Penelope who transferred to her own comic, edited by Gillian Allan. Although ostensibly a 'girls comic', it had an appeal that crossed the sexes. Aside from the title strip drawn by Frank Langford, The Man from UNCLE, Bewitched, Beverly Hillbillies and Marina all put in an appearance, along with Space Family Robinson, based on the Gold Key characters, and later The Angels, from Captain Scarlet.

In **TV21**, new strips came and went. Supercar and Burke's Law were replaced by the Munsters, an extra page of Agent 21's adventures and a dull industrial espionage story by Don Harley called The Investigator. This was later dropped in favour of the far superior Catch or Kill strip by Angus Allan and John Burns.

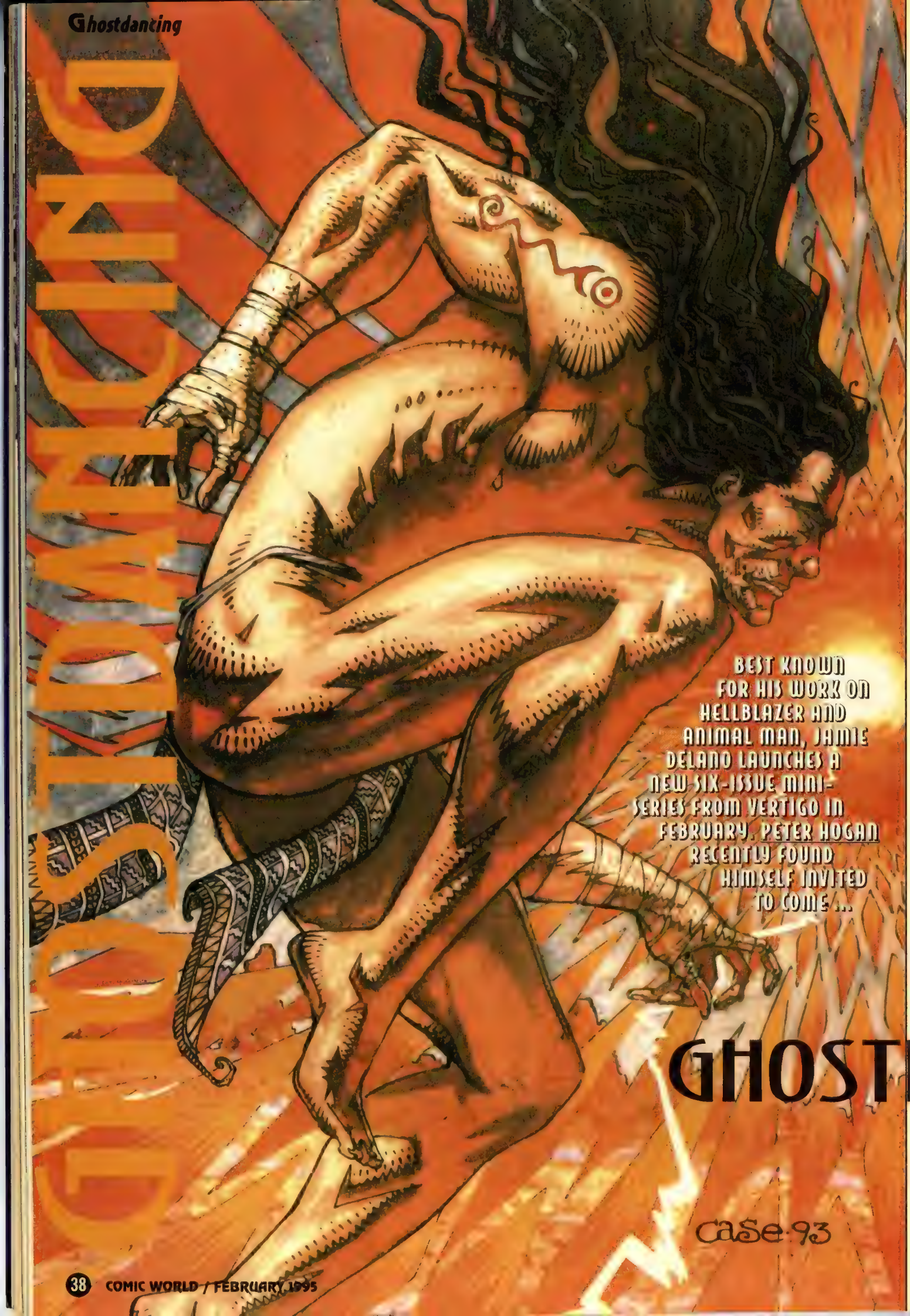
By the end of 1966, AP Films had been renamed Century 21, and United Artists had financed *Thunderbirds Are Go*. To publicise the film, the *Daily Mail* ran a comic strip by Don Lawrence and Alan Fennell, while *TV21* published a four part photostrip movie adaptation.

When the photostrip ended, the adventures of the Zero X spaceship continued in comic strip format. Angus Allan and Mike Noble transferred from Fireball XL5, working on stories that were faithful to the tone of the movie. So while XL5 travelled at the speed of light or beyond, Zero X took weeks to cross the Solar System.

At the end of 1967, more changes to the comic's line up, and to Century 21 Publishing had taken place. In *TV21*, Don Lawrence took over Fireball X15 on the back page, a spot formerly occupied by the Daleks for two years. New humour strips appeared briefly in this period, including R.E.Cord, Wright C.H.A.R.L.I.E. (drawn by Brian Lewis) and Sergeant Bilko by Tom Kerr.

On the publishing front, new comics were launched. Aside from the numerous annuals and storybooks (some of which were packaged by World Distributors), new publications included Candy, aimed at the nursery

CONTINUED PAGE 58


UNMASKED
BEST KNOWN FOR HIS WORK ON HELLBLAZER AND ANIMAL MAN, JAMIE DELANO LAUNCHES A NEW SIX-ISSUE MINI-SERIES FROM VERTIGO IN FEBRUARY. PETER HOGAN RECENTLY FOUND HIMSELF INVITED TO COME ...
GHOSTD
case 93

Art © DC Comics

GHOSTDANCING

Jamie Delano and Richard Case's Ghostdancing is a lot of different things. It's a supernatural thriller, a symbolic version of the apocalypse, and a millennial Western that features a fugitive rock star, secret society, and beings from various mythologies.

"It's veiled in contradiction," writer Delano admits. "It all sounds really worthy and intense when you try and describe it, but actually I think it's a laugh. It's a bit of a romp. Though I suppose it is an epic story too...I suppose epic's not a bad word to use." No, indeed.

Ghostdancing is certainly Delano's most mature and well-rounded work to date, one that lets his humorous side - which he often doesn't let show - have full rein. It's also action-packed, as Delano hints, attempting one last definition before giving up: "It's a road movie."

The idea came about several years ago, as a result of all the media coverage of the 1992 anniversary celebrations of Columbus and his so-called 'discovery of America'. Jamie felt that someone should tell the other side of the story.

"Yeah, basically, I always hated Western films when I was a kid, 'cause the Indians always got slaughtered, and it just didn't seem right. You know, you have a strong sense of natural justice when you're a child, don't you?"

But watching Westerns at least left Delano with an enduring love for the red-rock desert landscape, and a people bonded self-sufficiently with the land. As an adult, he read the true history of the West in books like Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, and his empathy for Native Americans deepened.

But, of course, Delano himself is not a Native American, as he's at pains to point out. He's English. I asked him how it felt to be writing about Native Americans and their mythological figures: "My culture is completely different, so of course my version of their mythological culture is going to be completely different from what it is to them. But nevertheless, by examining the mythology you get some sort of a glimpse into the heart and soul of a people and the land, I think. So, I tried to let these characters animate themselves, and speak to me about what it's like to be a Native American - a person with that sense of landscape and environment in them.

"To me, America - geographically - is an incredibly beautiful continent, and it is possible to look at it as only superficially ruined in a lot of ways, because the infestation of European culture is comparatively recent. There is a really ancient quality to the land, and

DANCING

that's what I was trying to identify with, to some extent, in this story. Basically, what the story is about is the contrast and conflict between a genetic sense of place, of belonging to the continent, and the uneasiness and psychic confusion and mess that it must do to people's heads who aren't a part of that - people who are trying to impose their own equally ancient but completely different culture on a place, which is what the colonists have done and still do."

It's clear from the fact that Delano has named the villains of the piece the Mammonites who he considers to be the primary legacy of the first European colonists in America: greed. "It's an obvious metaphor for greed and commercial capitalism, which is something that was not endemic to America before Europeans took it there. But the story doesn't say, 'If you're a white person you have no place in America'; what it says is, 'If your mind hasn't adapted, if you haven't learned to live in this place, then you're probably doomed'. It's not, 'Native Americans good, white folks bad'. It's not as simplistic as that.

"I guess what I was thinking was...throughout the history of America there's always been a cauldron-like seething. There have always been things trying to break through, and bubble up into the consciousness. I imagine that sense of place inspiring people, particularly as a metaphor in the western progression of colonization across the continent, until it reaches the Pacific and you get California...where everything starts to go crazy. Because the next step of exploration west is into some sort of mystic or psychic condition. So, I'm drawing all sorts of tenuous parallels, and allowing them to link into a conglomerate fantasy.

GHOST DANCE

"The story hypothesizes that the 1960s counterculture movement was very nearly the coming of what the Hopi Indians refer to as the "Fifth World", which is the end of the "Fourth World" - what we've got-and a new world in which nature is restored and the planet is healed. A paradise myth, basically. So what I'm saying is: It was close, maybe, in the 1960s, but it wasn't quite the right time. And the story hypothesizes that maybe now is right time, one hundred years after the Ghost Dance religion. We don't go into it very much in the story, but historically the Ghost Dance was pretty much the last gasp of the Plains Indians, basically. It was a...church, if you like, that prophesied a parallel to the Hopi Fifth World: waves of earth rolling and sweeping all the white people away. That all got completely squashed in the late 1890s, ending up with the death of Sitting Bull and the destruction of the Sioux as a nation.

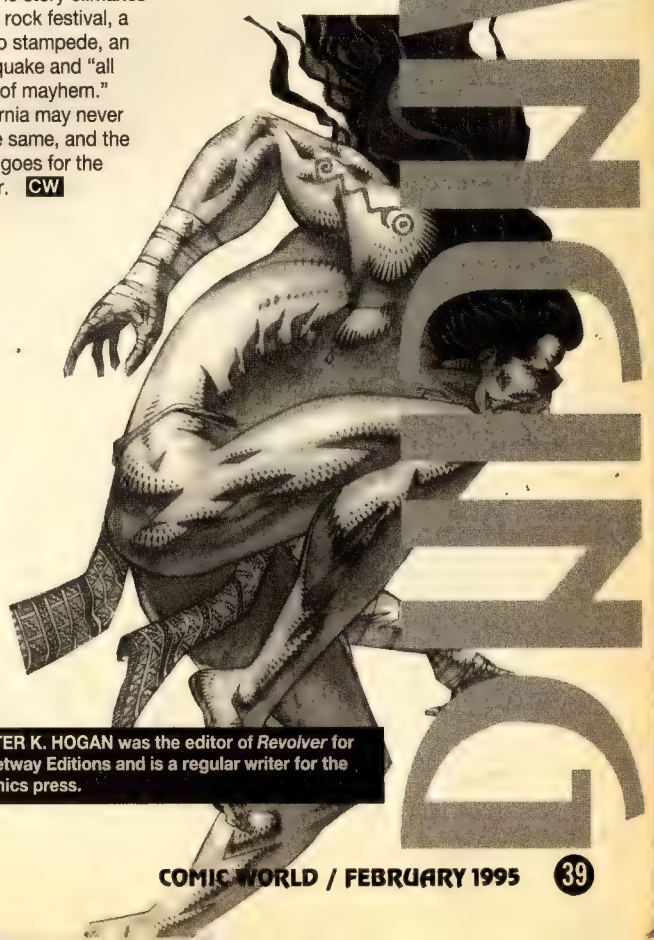
"So, the Ghost Dance religion was another chance - it was almost the Fifth World; again, it wasn't the right time. A hundred years later, it is - that's what the story says. As the story ends, it may or may not have been - I try to leave it as ambiguous as possible. "

Ghostdancing in the story refers to a drug synthesized by an ex-hippie rock star - a Jim Morrison-type character (except for the fact that he's alive - sorry romantic Doors fans, but Jim is dead) called Snake. Snake's living out in the desert when he discovers the drug-which when taken precipitates a new (and permanent) shift in consciousness (hey, this is fiction). Snake "sort of fancies himself as an Indian, although he's not, he's actually Polish in origin," Jamie explains. "And we're also concerned with various incidents in this guy's life in the late Sixties and early Seventies, when he was a leading musician in the counterculture. And back then he had a girlfriend who he knew as Brown Mary, but in actual fact she's one of those Native American power beings, White Buffalo Woman. And she was inspiring him to lead a sort of holistic revolution back then, but the Mammonites ensure that she and Snake get lured to a radical group in South Dakota, and they get set up by the FBI and all sorts of nastiness ensues. He gets away while she's imprisoned by the Mammonites, but each of them thinks the other is dead."

In captivity, White Buffalo Woman bears a child: the charmingly named Snot Boy (don't blame Jamie for the name - it's a very old myth). "He's the key character. He's been brought up by the Mammonites, and has great psychic abilities and sensitivities that they've been using for their own purposes. Eventually, he breaks out of Mammonite society, which is like an enclave city out in the desert that's culturally and politically locked in the 1950s, and goes in search of his parents. And he encounters Coyote out in the desert, in human guise as Father Craft, and travels with him to L.A."

Coyote is the 'trickster god', a mischievous being who always follows his own fairly unique agenda, who has entered our world in search of the lost White Buffalo Woman and her son. He is also, says Delano, "at the heart of the work," and thus things constantly may or may not be what they seem. "We've seen all these characters who are supposedly Native American power beings, but they could just be barking mad. Coyote certainly gives us that impression - he's a very contradictory character, which is what a trickster should be."

The story climaxes with a rock festival, a buffalo stampede, an earthquake and "all kinds of mayhem." California may never be the same, and the same goes for the reader. **CW**



PETER K. HOGAN was the editor of *Revolver* for Fleetway Editions and is a regular writer for the comics press.

MELISSA HYLAND TAKES A LOOK AT THE COMPUTER-ANIMATED REBOOT WITH COMIC ARTIST AND DESIGNER BRENDAN McCARTHY

Ghosts in the Mainframe

The New Year is always a time of fresh beginnings and ideas, and 1995 looks set to be no exception. On January 4, Children's ITV broadcast the first episode of a programme that has already become a smash hit in the States and looks set to change the whole development of the animation industry. That programme is *Reboot*, a cartoon series set in a high tech, computer fantasy world situated within a desktop PC, and bearing a slight resemblance in concept to Disney's *Tron*. But only very slight; for where the computer programme characters resembled their creators and were played by human actors in *Tron*, the Sprites that populate the city of Mainframe in *Reboot* are all entirely produced with advanced 3-D modelling programmes on computers.

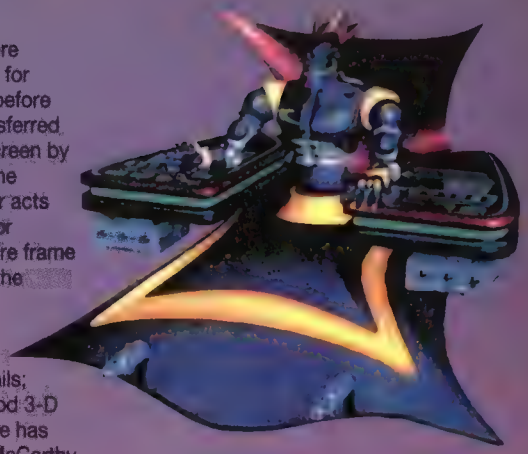
MELISSA HYLAND writes regularly for Animace magazine and previously contributed to last summer's Manga special

Within the Mainframe universe, the Sprites exist as feeling, thinking, practically human entities with no awareness of our world that exists outside the computer. In fact it is us, or those who use the computer, that pose one of the many threats in the Sprite's lives, because whenever a human loads in a computer Game and plays it, it descends on Mainframe and takes over, trapping those unfortunate enough to be in the way inside like an alternate universe. The Games take many forms, like *Space Invaders* where the Sprites get attacked by aliens, and once inside there is no escape until the Game ends. Once it is over, anything that was damaged or anyone who was hurt during the Game will remain so afterwards; to the Sprites, it is their equivalent of a natural disaster. There are two ways to deal with a Game: either keep running from the danger or "reboot" yourself so that you become part of it, and actually pit yourself against the Player - and hopefully win, thereby surviving.

As if that wasn't enough to deal with, Mainframe also boasts a plethora of computerised villains led by Megabyte, a psychopathic virus out to rule the whole of Mainframe, though he isn't averse to anything else that comes his way. And it does when a programmer in our world uses the computer containing Mainframe to hack into another system, creating a portal between Megabyte's world and that of the technologically superior Super Computer. Before you can say "march on Poland" however, he finds his way blocked by Bob, one the Super Computer's guardian programmes, whose battle to keep Megabyte out ends with both of them being trapped in Mainframe. Now cut off from his home world, Bob has no choice but to settle in Mainframe, where he soon finds friends in the shape of Dot, a feisty diner owner and her younger brother Enzo. Together the three battle Megabyte, his equally twisted female counterpart Hexadecimal and her thuggish minions, and, of course, you, the Game Player, every time you load up.

The concept for Reboot was originally created some years back by the Vancouver based computer animation group Ian Pearson, Phil Mitchell and Gavin Blair, now known collectively as the Hub. One of their first encounters with computer animation techniques was in the 1980s, when they teamed up with pop video/ film director Steve Barron to produce Dire Straits' famous *Money For Nothing* video. Several years on, the gang are all together again, with the Hub providing the graphics with more advanced technology of today in tandem with Barron's Limelight Films company that set the deal with Canadian animation company BLT and American TV network ABC plus the UK's Meridian for the programme's production. Only one thing was now needed - an artist to create the visual designs for the setting and characters of Reboot. And who better to turn to than Brendan McCarthy, the British comic book artist whose background not only took in highly praised comics like *Rogan Gosh, Strange Days* and *Skin*, but also film storyboards [*see CW#22*] and experience of computer animation himself.

"Reboot is my first television series," he says, "but I also worked on the prototype of that computer animation style on the pop promo for *Let's Get Rocked*, the award winning



which were circulated for approval before being transferred onto the screen by Pearson. The graph paper acts as a guide for building a wire frame upon which the character is rendered up, mapping any additional details; and once a good 3-D computer image has been created, McCarthy once again takes over, making adjustments literally on the screen with a chinagraph pencil, and experimenting with colour and certain CGI effects.

"We certainly developed some really great characters and set ups" says McCarthy. "The villains Megabyte and Hexadecimal were good to do: you can always go much further with the villains. Megabyte took quite a while to fully develop, we just kept adding muscles onto more muscles until we had a kind of 'Darth Vader on steroids'. Other characters worked straight away, like Hexadecimal and Hack and Slash. The more 'human' characters, the central cast of the show, took a long time to build, because you really do have to get the characters right. They have to have a real personality and not just appear as

MTV clip for Def Leppard. That was my first collaboration with Ian Pearson and the Hub crew. I designed and storyboarded the CGI sequences for that rock video and it gave me an idea of what the design possibilities were in terms of computer animation."

Just as with *Let's Get Rocked*, the whole design process for *Reboot's* visuals begins with McCarthy's drawings of the characters and objects, fully rotated on graph paper,

cold computer clones. Coming up with a design for a central hero, who is, if you like, the straight man to all the craziness around him was much more difficult, but in the end, I hit on the idea of giving Bob chrome dreadlocks and blue skin. There seemed no good reason to make all the skin tones conform to any racial type: you'll notice that all the characters have their own colour schemes."

With the impact already created by *Reboot's* success in America - becoming ABC's most highly rated Saturday morning show ever, with just a three episode preview - could it be that the traditional cel animation will have to make way for the computer in the future? McCarthy certainly seems to think so, to the extent of looking into the prospects of using elements from *Rogan Gosh* for another CGI series. "I find the new developments in, and future prospects of, computer animation to be very exciting; far more than traditional cel animation, which I feel has had it's day. Over the next ten years, animation will change radically and I have high hopes that the subject matter too will also change and improve. Manga animation will change over to CGI without a doubt. I believe that this new technology will really put our imaginations to the test. Exploring the imagination, and then pinning down those outlandish visions and dreams, making them move, talk and live on through the power of this fantastic technology. Great things are happening! It's great to be in at the beginning of a great new revolution in words and images... this time with computers." CW

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Who's Who IN BRITISH COMICS

ABNETT, DAN (1965-). Born in Rochester on October 12, 1965, and educated at Maidstone Grammar School before reading English at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford where he graduated with a B.A. (hons) in English language and literature. Abnett worked at Marvel UK as an editorial trainee, writing his first story (featuring "Action Force") around 1987. He followed this with countless stories for the juvenile and nursery titles published by Marvel, ranging from "The Real Ghostbusters" to "The Care Bears", only moving to more adult material when he submitted a story to *Dr Who Monthly*.

As an editor he was involved in various Marvel titles, including *Thundercats* (1988), *The Real Ghostbusters* (1988), *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* (1988), *The Sleeze Brothers* (1989-90), *Strip* (1990) and various annuals; after leaving Marvel he subsequently (briefly) edited *Toxic!* (1991), but has made more impact as a writer of fast, furious mainstream adventure. His work first gained attention through the ecological superhero series *Knights of Pendragon* (1990-91, written with John TOMLINSON), but took a boost with the publication of *Death's Head II* (1992) which he has continued beyond the initial four-issue series, picking up further high-visibility work through the pages of *The Punisher, Punisher: War Zone, Legends of the Dark Knight, Mutatis* and *Scarlet Witch*.

A prolific writer, Abnett is currently working on various titles including *Force Works* and *Ninjak* in collaboration with Andy LANNING and various mini-series, both solo and with fellow ex-Marvel editor Tomlinson, including the long-awaited *Uther, the Half-Dead King* - essentially a prequel to the Arthurian legend - and *Warbirds*, a re-titling of *Pale Horses*, both penned for Atomeka in 1992. [SH]

>>"Dark Guardian" by Steve Holland (in Comic World 20, Oct 1993)

ALL I WANTED WAS PEACE AND QUIET ALL I GOT WAS HYPER-ACTIVE PUPPIES WITH 'X'S ON THEIR ROMPER SUITS
TAKE IT FROM ME, YOU GUYS HAVE OVERDOSED ON CORPORATE IMAGE

Death's Head II. Art by Liam Sharp/Cam Smith

STRIPOGRAPHY

Action Force (based on the Kenner Toys figures):
- Double Bluff (in *Action Force Monthly* 1, Jun 1988, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Cam Smith)
- Smooth Operator (in *Action Force Monthly* 7, Dec 1988, art by Kev Hopgood/Dave Hine)
- Wild Wildlife (in *Action Force Monthly* 11, Apr 1989, art by Robin Smith)

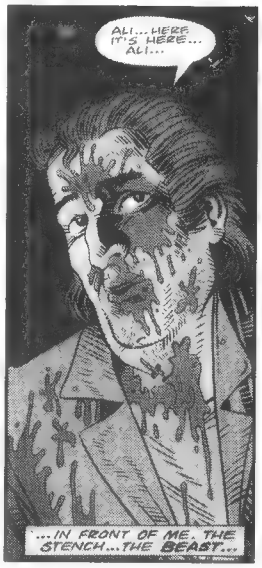
Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers (based on the toys figures):
- Badlands (in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 3, 18 Jun 1988, art by Kev Hopgood/ Simon Coleby)
- The Man With No Face (in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 4, 2 Jul 1988, art by Liam Sharp/Andy Wildman)
- The Lone Ranger (in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 5, 15 Jul 1988, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Dave Elliott)
- Winged Justice (with Steve White, in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 7, 13 Aug 1988, art by Kev Hopgood/Dave Elliott)
- The Jewel in the Crown (with Steve White, in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 8, 27 Aug 1988, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Cam Smith)
- One of Our Lawmen is Missing (with Steve White, in *Adventures of the Galaxy Rangers* 9, 10 Sep 1988, art by Mark Collins/Dave Elliott)
- Fistful of Credits (in *Thundercats* 82, 8 Oct 1988, art by Jeff Anderson)

The Care Bears (based on the toy range, in *Care Bears*, various stories, c1988)

Thundercats (based on the tv show, in *Thundercats*, various stories, c1988)

James Bond Junior (based on the tv show, in *James Bond Junior*, c1988)

Count Duckula (based on the tv show, in *Count Duckula*, c1988)



Knights of Pendragon. Art by Gary Erskine/Andy Lanning

Transformers (based on the toy range, in *Transformers*, c1988)

Rupert (in *Rupert*, c1988)

The Real Ghostbusters (based on the tv characters, in *The Real Ghostbusters*, various stories, 1988-89)

Doctor Who (based on the tv character):
- Hunger From the Ends of Time (in *Incredible Hulk Presents*, 198?, art by John Ridgway; reprinted in *Dr Who Monthly* 157-159, 1990)
- Echoes of Mogor (in *Dr Who Monthly* 143-144, Dec 1988-Jan 1989, art by John Ridgway)
- The Infinity Season (text story, in *Dr Who Monthly* 151, 1989, illus by Richard Dolan)
- Darkness Falling (in *Dr Who Monthly* 167, Nov 1990, art by Lee Sullivan/Mark Farmer)
- Heliotrope Bouquet (in *Dr Who Monthly* 181, Dec 1991, art by Lee Sullivan)
- Conflict of Interest (in *Dr Who Monthly* 183, 18 Feb 1992, art by Steve Whitaker)
- The Grief (in *Dr Who Monthly* 185-187, 15 Apr-13 May 1992, art by Vincent Danks/ Adolfo Buylla)
- Pureblood (in *Dr Who Monthly* 193-196, 25 Nov 1992-17 Feb 1993, art by Colin Andrew)

WILLIAM TELL (graphic novel, Marvel, 1989, art by Jeff Anderson/Simon Coleby & Cam Smith)

The Knights of Pendragon (with John Tomlinson):
- (First) (in *The Knights of Pendragon* 1-18, Jul 1990-Dec 1991, art by Gary Erskine/ Andy Lanning, Erskine/Bambos)
- (Second) (in *Overkill 1-11*, 24 Apr-11 Sep 1992, art by Phil Gascoine/Adolfo Buylla, Gascoine/Bambos, John Royle/Martin Griffiths; reprinted in *Knights of Pendragon* 1-5, Jul-Nov 1992/ original stories in *Knights of Pendragon* 6-15, Dec 1992-Sep 1993, art by John Royle/Martin Griffiths, Terry Clarke, John Mould)

I'M HAPPY HOGAN... SAY IS THAT THING ON?
WE ARE DISCUSSING SECRETS KNOWN ONLY TO THE ENLIGHTENED FEW AND I DON'T APPRECIATE HAWKING THAT THING THRUST IN MY FACE.
WHO YOU LOOKING TO DO THIS? AGENT X'LL KILL HIM.
...SO MANY ACTING LIKE OUTER WORLDERS MELT IN HER
NOT NOW, WORLDER...

Force Works. Art by Stu Johnson/Don Hudson

Death's Head II:
(in *Death's Head II 1-4*, Mar-Jun 1992, art by Liam Sharp/Andy Lanning; reprinted in *Overkill 12-20*, 25 Sep 1992-15 Jan 1993)
(in *Death's Head II 1-16*, Dec 1992-Mar 1994, art by Liam Sharp 1-4, Dell Barras 5, Simon Coleby 6-7,9,11-16, Anthony Williams 8, Dougie Braithwaite 10; reprinted in *Overkill 22-42*, 12 Feb-19 Nov 1993)
(in *Incomplete Death's Head 1-12*, Jan-Dec 1993, art by Simon Coleby except Coleby/Neil Bushnell 12)
The Punisher (with Andy Lanning):
Eurohit (in *The Punisher 64-70*, Jun-late Sep 1992, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Al Williamson)
(various stories) (in *The Punisher 71-75*, Oct 1992-Feb 1973, art by Dougie Braithwaite/various inkers incl. Al Williamson, Josef Robinson)
Psychoville (in *Punisher: War Zone 12-16*, Feb-Jun 1993, art by Mike McKone/Mark McKenna)
Firefight (in *The Punisher 82-84*, Sep-Nov 1993, art by Hugh Haynes/Mark McKenna)
(title?) (in *Punisher Annual 7*, 1993, art by Dougie Braithwaite/Al Williamson)
No Rules (in *Punisher 94-95*, Sep-Oct 1994, art by Frank Teran)
Batman: Mercy (with Andy Lanning, in *Legends of the Dark Knight* 37, Sep 1992, art by Colin McNeil)
Mutatis (with Andy Lanning, in *Mutatis 1-3*, Sep-Nov 1992, art by John Higgins/Lanning)
Dinosaurs:
Succession (with Steve White, in *Epic 4*, Jul 1992, art by John McCrea)
(various untitled stories) (in *Dinosaurs*, Oct 1992, art by Dermot Power, Steve Hambridge, Kev Hopgood, Colin MacNeil)
Battle Tide (with Andy Lanning, art by Geoff Senior):
Battle Tide (in *Battle Tide 1-4*, Dec 1992-Mar 1993; reprinted in Battle Tide Special, 1993)
Battletide II: Death's Head II & Killpower (in *Battletide II 1-4*, Aug-Nov 1993)
Pale Horses (with Steve White, in A1 #3, Jan 1993, art by Gary Erskine)
The Lords of Misrule (with John Tomlinson, in *The Lords of Misrule*, Mar 1993, art by Gary Erskine)
MyS-TECH Wars (in *MyS-TECH Wars 1-4*, Mar-Jun 1993, art by Bryan Hitch/Jeff Anderson)
The Skin of Hadrosaurs (in *Carnosaur Carnage*, Aug 1993, art by Kev Walker)
Big in Japan (in *Carnosaur Carnage*, Aug 1993, art by Anthony Williams)
Death3 (in *Death3 1-4*, Sep-Dec 1993, art by Dell Barras)
Dark Guard (in *Dark Guard 1-4*, Oct 1993-Jan 1994, art by Carlos Pacheco/Oscar Jiminez; reprinted in *Overkill 43-49?*, Dec 1993-Jun 1994)
Gunrunner (with Andy Lanning, in *Gunrunner 1-2*, Oct-Nov 1993, art by Terry Clarke/Adolfo Buylla 1, Anthony Williams/Jeff Anderson 2)
Scarlet Witch:
(with Andy Lanning, in *Scarlet Witch 1-4*, Dec 1993-Mar 1994 art by John Higgins/Mark McKenna)
(in *Marvel Comics Presents 172*, late Jan 1995, art by John Czop/Scott Elmer)
Force Works:
(with Andy Lanning, in *Force Works 1-present*, Jul 1994-now, art by Tom Tenney/Rey Garcia 1-4, Paul Ryan /Garcia 5, Dave Taylor/Garcia 6-now)
(various stories) (in *Marvel Comics Presents 169-172*, early Dec 1994-late Jan 1995, art by various artists)
Dr Strange: Stranger at my Heels! (in *Dr Strange 68*, Aug 1994, art by Melvin Rubi/Rich Rankin)
Ectokid (with Andy Lanning, in *Ectokid Unleashed 1*, 1994, art by Hector Gomez)
Midnight Sons: Blood Brothers (in *Midnight Sons Unlimited 7*, Oct 1994, art by Nick Napolitano/Bob Downs. Note: contents page credits Simon Furman as writer)
UTHER, THE HALF-DEAD KING (graphic novel, NBM Publishing, Dec 1994, art by Bo Hampton)
Ninjak (with Andy Lanning, in *Ninjak 11-present*, Jan 1995-now, art by Yvel Guichet/ Stan Drake 11-12, Andrew Currie/Bollinger 13-now)

ACKLIN, JEFF (?-). American artist, member of the Marvel Bullpen who produced covers and pin-ups for Marvel UK. [DR]

ADAM, RUTH (AUGUSTA) (1907-1977). Writer of the long-running "Susan of St. Bride's" series for *Girl* illustrated by Peter Kay. The story of a girl who wants to become a nurse, it proved so popular following its launch in 1955 that it was given the cover of *Girl* in 1958. It ran until 1962, and also appeared in many of the annuals. Born in Nottingham, she began her career first as a teacher then as a journalist, author and playwrite. She married Kenneth Adam, CBE, FRSA, a former Director of BBC Television, in 1932. Mrs Adam's first published play (for children) was *Safety First* (1933), a one-act comedy, and her first novel, *War on Saturday Week*, was published in 1937 by Chapman & Hall, followed by *I'm Not Complaining* (1938), *There Needs No Ghost* (1939), *Murder in the Home Guard* (1942), *Set to Partners* (1947), *So Sweet a Changeling* (1954), *Fetch Her Away* (1954) and *Look Who's Talking* (1960). Her "*Susan of St. Bride's*" series also encompassed two novels, *A Stepmother for Susan of St. Bride's* (Hulton, 1958) and *Susan and the Wrong Baby* (Longacre, 1961).

Susan of St. Bride's. Art by Peter Kay

Her non-fiction ranged from *They Built A Nation* (1943), a children's history of America, to *Child Care and Careers in Child Care* (1960). She penned two biographical works, *What Shaw Really Said* (1966) and *Beatrice Webb: A Life, 1858-1943* (with Kitty Muggeridge, 1967), and the autobiographical *A House in the Country* (1957). Her last book, *A Woman's Place*, 1910-1975 looked at the changing ethos of women over the years. She was also a regular contributor to newspapers and journals. She died on February 3, 1977. [SH]
>> The Times, February 7, 1977 (obituary)

DO REMEMBER, SUSAN DEAR, THAT IT'S ONLY BY LUCK YOU'VE GOT A CHANCE TO TRAIN. UNLESS MATRON BELIEVES YOU'RE SERIOUS ABOUT IT, SHE WON'T KEEP YOU.
OH, I KNOW, DADDY—

ADAMS, FREDERICK K. (?-). One-time sub-editor of *Gem* (1921) and on the staff of other boys' papers at Amalgamated Press, as well as a contributor to papers such as *Boys Cinema, Rocket, Champion* and *Scout*. [WL/DA]
>>MBBF

ADAMS, RICHARD F. (?-). Contributor to British underground titles such as *Hedgehog Times, Jampacked Funnies* and *The Trials of Nasty Tales*. [SH]

ADAMS, ROB (?-).
Stripography
Tapestry (in *Graphixus 5*, Sep 1978)

LOOKING AT THINGS by Tom Adams
Red deer look their best on the wild moors and mountains of Scotland. But you can see them in other places like Richmond Park or the New Forest. Stags, or male red deer, shed their horns every winter and grow new ones in the spring. Below the stag you can see a hind and her baby fawn.
In the days of Robin Hood, the red deer roamed wild in many large forests like Sherwood, but the penalty for killing a deer was death

Looking At Things. Art by Tom Adams

ADAMS, TOM (?-). Wild-animal artist whose work appeared in *Swift* in the late 1950s. [SH]
Stripography
Looking At Things (feature, in *Swift*, 25 Aug 1956-30 Mar 1957)
British Birds and their Nests (feature, in *Swift*, 24 May-11 Oct 1958)
British Wild Animals (feature, in *Swift*, 18 Oct 1958-28 Feb 1959)

ADKINS, DAN (L.) (1937-). American artist whose major influences were Wally Wood, John Schonherr and John Buscema. He began contributing illustrations to magazines in the early 1960s, and subsequently worked as an assistant to Wally Wood for sixteen months. His first solo work appeared in Warren's black & white magazines. The bulk of his work was published by Marvel for whom he drew *Submariner, Dr Strange* and *X-Men*, then switching to inking, particularly *Captain Marvel, Conan, Warlock* and countless other strips from 1967. He also inked strips for National, including *Batman* and *Superman*, and Charlton, and ran a studio in the 1970s, alumnae including Val Mayerik and P. Craig Russell. He was an Art Director for Marvel in the late 1970s, during which time he worked on various Marvel UK titles inking covers, posters and intro pages. [DR/SH]
>>WWA

Next month: Frederick Adkins and Charlie Adlard

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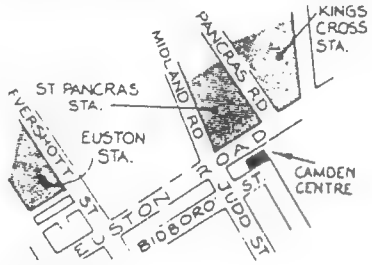

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Richard Hill's REVIEWS

Even as I praised *Mr. Hero: The Newmatic Man* - the first release by fledgeling company Tekno Comics - I wondered how long it would take before its mature style was submerged in favour of something more like a poor man's Image. The answer has arrived depressingly soon in

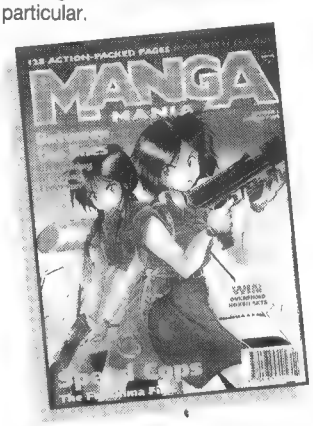
the form of **Gene Roddenberry's Lost Universe #1** ($1.95). All the trademarks are here. The story leaps into action scenes before we understand what's at stake, making the issue just a parade of mindless violence. Naturally the heroine has silicon implants in her chest. It's an Image comic all right. Much is made in the text pieces of Roddenberry vision, his innate optimism. There was also an appreciation of the traditional values, like the basics of storytelling that are missing here.

Contrast *Lost Universe* with the 'Judge Dredd' episode in **2000AD Prog 918** (Fleetway, 80p Earth money, while on Venus it's...oh never mind). Dredd's a man of discipline, and so's his writer John Wagner, accomplishing more than his meagre ration of pages than the *Lost Universe* team manages in over twenty. Despite modern touches like the dance music column and the increasingly flashy Nerve Centre, *2000AD* remains

steadfast at its heart. The quaintly surreal 'Skizz III' and a 'Future Shock' that fails on a spectacular level to make sense, much less surprise, will remind you of many of those old progs. The future needn't be so different from the past.

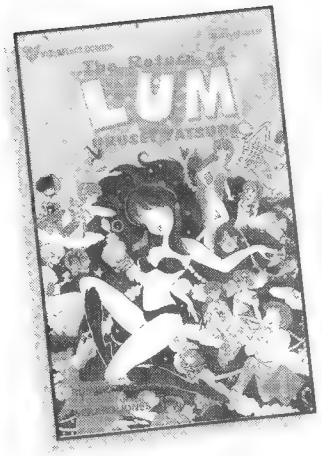
The various futures depicted in *manga* - Japanese comics - are at once familiar and shockingly alien, and **Manga Mania #18** (Manga Publishing, £1.95) has alternative visions by the ton. While it's not as thick as its Japanese equivalents, the anthology is starting to emulate that 'telephone directory' feel. There's an awful lot of pages, packed with fast-paced sf manga like 'Akira' and 'Bubblegum Crisis'. Entertaining bite-sized text features round out a strong package.

Manga needn't deal with the future: **The Return of Lum: Urusei Yatsura** (Viz Select, $2.95; the sub-title translates roughly as 'those obnoxious aliens') pokes fun at contemporary society and its ways. Alien babe Lum acts as our eyes into modern Japanese student life, as she tries to figure out humans - and men in particular.



This is text-book manga, with the characters' internal emotions communicated through wild pyrotechnical backgrounds and violent slapstick. Creator Rumiko Takahashi's light touch means that even when the plot sags, we're carried through by sheer exuberance - a demon on a Vespa moped, indeed.

Batman was the last character you would have expected would suit this vibrant, animation-influenced style - until *The Batman Adventures* came along. Two years into a thrilling run, the title's confidently building on its appeal with spin-offs galore. That titles like **The Batman Adventures Holiday Special** (DC, $2.95) give talent from the TV cartoons like Bruce Timm and Paul Dini a chance to get their work down on paper is a double blessing. Timm's flair with



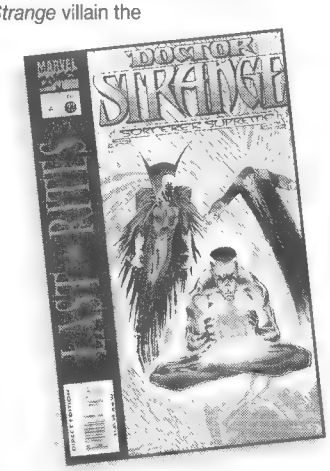
composition and line on his piece is outstanding, but other artists are equally capable. *Adventures* is FUN and EXCITING - two adjectives that rarely crop up in talk of today's comics. You'll read these again and again and still want more - and it looks like we're going to get it.

'FUN' is the last thing you'll think about while reading **Face** (DC/Vertigo, $4.95), but that wa surely not the intention of the creators. After the exhilarating trip of surrealism and emotion of *Enigma*, Peter Milligan and Duncan Fegredo re-unite for a tale that's little short of harrowing. Milligan's plot brings together the human body and the painter's canvas until there is no difference between the two, challenging our notions of surface and artiface - the way we assess a person by how he or she looks, or the way we

value material things above each other. He does this in a particularly shocking sequence of set pieces, but we become numbed to the procession of horrors, as if under the effect of the surgeon's anaesthetic ourselves. You may applaud the conceptual strength of the piece, but you'll care little for the lines on paper made into flesh and bone for your enlightenment.

By way of completing the circle, 'EXCITEMENT' is the last thing you'll think about while reading **Thor #482** (Marvel $2.95). In commemoration of the Thunder God's 400th issue since it was renamed from *Journey Into Mystery*, there's an extra-length lead story - and doesn't it feel like it? As writer Roy Thomas acts out his preoccupation with characters long since worn thin through overuse, there's not a word or panel that convinces you any of this should matter a damn to you. Is there a scrap of drama or tension in this ponderous broth? Verily, I say thee nay!

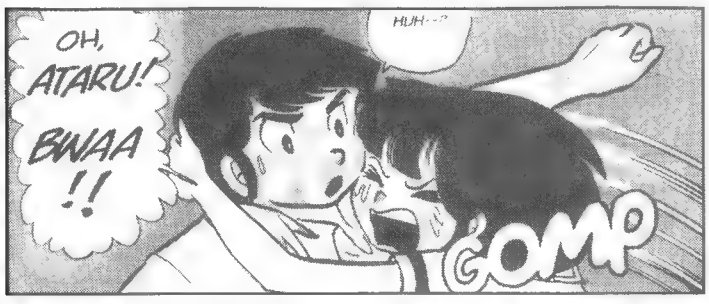
Dr. Strange #73 (Marvel, $1.95) is a little more interesting, although it largely feels like a holding action to fill pages before that landmark 75th issue. The master magician confronts two dark aspects of himself given form, and by the end of the issue he's still there, confronting them. In between there's an excursion to a sub-plot where we see how venerable *Strange* villain the



Dread Dormammu looks when he's stripped of his magic flame. You do get the feeling this could have been accomplished in a more compelling manner in half the pages.

Strangers In Paradise #2 (Abstract Studio, $2.75) is a hive of activity by comparison, as befits its soapy plot. Terry Moore's art looks vaguely awkward at first glance, but you soon adjust to its quirks and indeed warm to them - it's a big-hearted style that enhances some good storytelling. Full of contrast, with sadness and laughter on the same page, *Strangers* is a distinctive and attractive read.

Review copies courtesy of Forever People, 35 Park Street, Bristol (Telephone 01179 265 454). Prices given in dollar may vary from shop to shop.



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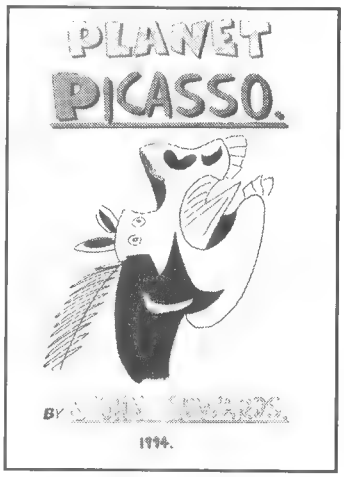
Steve Cook's SMALL PRESS

As you read this, Christmas will be but a distant memory, all those graphic novels will have been read, games finished and bottles of alcohol drunk. What better then to cheer yourself up with a selection of excellent small press comics? As I write this, the festive season is well under way and I am selflessly putting off my prezzie shopping and manic partying, so as to let you know what to buy.

Its rare to see a self-published comic taking on such elevated themes as Shakespeare, but that's exactly the task Garen Ewing has set himself with his version of **The Tempest**. I have to say that this comic impressed me from the word go! *The Tempest* is one of my favourite Shakespeare plays, having been tackled so originally by Derek Jarman in the eighties and more recently in Gielgud's *Prospero's Books*. Purists may frown at Garen's abridged and rewritten text, but the changes he has made work well, simplifying reading without losing the feel of the original language. The art is simply stunning - I really cannot sum it up in any other way. If you ever thought that all small press is rushed or amateur, then this is really the comic to prove you wrong. To sum the comic up, Garen has included several pages of historical and explanatory notes about characters, monsters and the history of the play itself. This comic is ideal for anyone studying the play or with any sort of passing interest in Shakespeare. In fact I would gladly recommend it to anyone who has found Shakespeare staid or boring in the past, as when all's said and done, this is an exciting and very readable adventure story. It completely justifies the £2.00 cost (£2.50 in shops) and is available from King Rat Publishing, 93 Sackville Gardens, East Grinstead RH19 2AR.

Mal Earl has produced an interesting one-shot called **Solus**. It tells the simple story of a future society where life on Earth has become untenable. A single man is the protector of the last great whales.



This is a tender story which is an unusual approach to take in science fiction, but one that works very well indeed. The only criticism is that the comic is too short - I would have liked to see more, but as it is being sold as a taster of Mal's other works, it succeeds in whetting the appetite. Send £1.00 plus an A5 SAE to Mal Earl, 18 Thorntrees Drive, Thornhill, Egremont CA22 2SU.

John Edwards has work in many anthologies and perhaps the most noticeable quality he has is his ability to experiment with different styles, many of them different to anything else you will have seen in a comic. **Planet Picasso** has appeared as accompanying strips in several 'zines now, and here John has put all the artwork together from his *Guernica* series to make one extended narrative. Now, I know very little about Picasso, but from what I can tell, *Planet Picasso* is based on a series of sketches produced by the master himself. The narrative is a reflection in the first person on Picasso's life and the effect of his art. You'll either love this as a piece of groundbreaking narrative art that expands the boundaries of comics, or be slightly baffled by it.

The second comic from the same

creator is **Dr Stranger: Master of Black Magic**. This is a cleverly crafted pair of strips using original *Dr Strange* artwork by Steve Ditko. I wouldn't go so far as to say that John has then added his own story, rather he has inserted an existential dialogue on the nature of magic in the first and retold a mystical dream in the second. Again, I feel this comic will only truly appeal if you know something about the original Dr Strange. I was personally lost early on. John Edwards' comics are available from 41 Priory Road, Exeter EX4 7AP. *Planet Picasso* costs £1.00 and *Dr Stranger* is 75p. Send an A5 SAE, too.

Jellyland by Anthony Ditchfield is a cautionary tale of a man who tries to give up drinking and vows to stick to the straight and narrow. Such a premise should immediately fill you with a grim sense of foreboding and I personally feel that there should be a warning attached to this comic advising you not to try such a thing yourself! Needless to say, giving up drinking has a disastrous effect upon the hapless lad and leads to all sorts of chaos. I read this the first time after a night out and I would suggest that the correct state of inebriation will enhance your enjoyment of what is a very funny first comic. By the time you read this, Anthony will have his second comic ready, but you can get *Jellyland* for £1.00 from 5 Maple Court, Winton Way, Streatham SW16 3RA.

The most recent issue of **Bang** from Mark Robinson is another curious subject for a comic. It describes his personal experiences of an Evangelical church he was a member of for a short time. No judgement is called during the telling of the story, which is a boon. Mark simply presents the story of how he came to be involved in the church and exposes his secret ulterior motive! The art is very simple, yet extremely effective, for some reason it makes me think of the design values of the fifties. This simple story comes highly recommended for £1.00 and an SAE from Mark Robinson, 53 Heol Coed Cae, Whitchurch, Cardiff CF4 1HQ.

Last, but by no means least is a varies collection of work from Ham Khan, a contributor to *Inkling* for some time. **Edge** collects short strips

and single panel strips which have mostly appeared before. Ham's work strongly reminds me of some Moebius black and white pieces. He uses a very fine shading effect that must take forever to put down on paper. The surreal images - from a man cutting off body parts while standing on a scale, to a chess game played with human fingers - are occasionally grotesque but always humorous and finely observed. Closer perhaps to fine art than most strips, these are still undoubtedly comic strips first and foremost. 90p and an SAE gets this fine collection delivered to your door from 8 Carisbrook, Colney Hatch Lane, London N10 1EJ.

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Finger on the Button

COLM MEANEY IS CARVING A SUCCESSFUL FILM CAREER TO RIVAL HIS DEEP SPACE EXPLOITS. JOHN MOSBY FINDS THE ACTOR SWAPPING SPACE-STATIONS FOR IRISH VALLEYS.

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine © Paramount Pictures

Art by Gordon Purcell/Terry Pallot © Malibu Comics Entertainment Inc

Colm (pronounced Colum) Meaney is a busy guy. As well as his regular Star Trek role as Miles O'Brien, he's also appearing in a number of other roles over the next few weeks and months.

War of the Buttons, which was released recently sees him as a father caught up in the school-yard war between two young gangs in rural Ireland. It's a charming, timeless film from the skilled hands of David Puttnam. Colm may not be the main star but it's another character role he can add to an already impressive C.V. He'll also be starring with Hugh Grant and Tara Fitzgerald in The Englishman who Went Up a Hill and Came Down a Mountain, the true story of a Welsh village's attempt to have their hill officially recognised as a...(you guessed it) mountain. Colm is the rascally head of the villagers who try to keep Hugh Grant occupied while they put their plan into action.

Those of you with Sky should see him in Scarlet, the mini-series sequel to the classic Gone With the Wind. He's no longer an O'Brien. He's an O'Hara. You'll be relieved to know that doesn't mean he'll be slipping into high-heels...he's playing Father Cole O'Hara, a close relative of Scarlett (played by Joanne Whalley-Kilmer).

But, of course, he's best known for his gruff transporter chief now serving aboard Deep Space Nine. I asked him how his involvement with *Star Trek* first came about.

"I auditioned like most of the other actors. They were wanting other people apart from the 'main' cast who were also members of the crew. I didn't have any name or particular character. So I did the pilot. They

asked me to do some more episodes during the first season, but I was back in New York and wasn't able to. I was in New York for a year so I missed the first two seasons. I went onto film another six or so episodes, but it isn't really until seasons four through six that my character really develops."

It took a while but the character finally got a name and official position on the Enterprise: "They finally decided to put me in the Transporter room and make me Transporter Chief. I picked up the script for one episode and suddenly there was this Chief O'Brien. I freaked...I thought 'Who's this O'Brien character. Am I out of a job (laughs). They'd decided that was the character's name and there I was. Once you've got a name, you know that you're going to be around for a while...but you have to stay away from Away Teams!" he laughs.

During the fourth and fifth season, O'Brien was given more and more to do and we build up a history for the gruff but well-meaning crew-member. He marries Keiko in a ship-board ceremony presided over by Data and Picard and becomes a father (with a little bit of Klingon mid-wifery aid from resident Klingon Worf.

With the rise of the next stage in the Trek mythos, O'Brien and Meaney were offered a promotion to main cast membership of the new *Deep Space Nine*. Were their any notable changes for the actor?

"Not really...I have a lot more to do. There is a difference between being a 'reoccurring' character and a 'regular' character. With *Deep Space* there's been more time to see O'Brien and Keiko together and more stories to be involved with - after all I'm in just about every episode - but the actual character of O'Brien hasn't really changed as such."

The third season of *Deep Space Nine* has begun to air Stateside. In no uncertain terms, this will be an important time for the show. Already some Trek fans are complaining that *Deep Space* doesn't have the same feel as its predecessors. Fans of the show point to the beginnings of *Next Generation* and remind everyone that that show didn't really hit its stride until its third season. *DS9* isn't just a variation on *NG*: it's a whole new perspective on the final frontier.

But whether the tone is different is really not the point - the main thing is how popular the show is in the ratings. At the moment, the ratings are good. Not excellent, but impressive when compared to anything other than *Next Generation* which, let's face it, has had the lion's-share of publicity in the last year as it made its last small screen mission. But the new season will have a few changes.

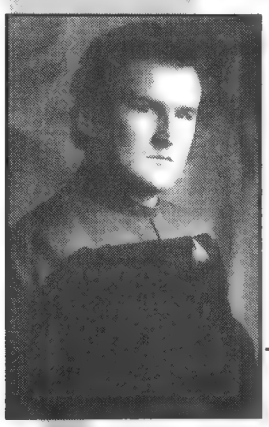
"What we're seeing in the scripts at the moment is that we tend to leave the station a lot more. We tend to spend a lot more time exploring. One of the criticisms that came from fans was the lack of 'boldly going' aboard a starship. After all, we are on a stationary space-station. We have a new space-craft, bigger than the normal shuttles, that we get to use. There's a whole new alien force to deal with, our equivalent of the Borg called the Jem'hadar who come from the opposite side of the wormhole"

Colm is happy to go on playing O'Brien since the shooting schedule (seven days for the average episode, but often less if he's not the main focus of that episode's plot) allows the actor to go off and involve nimself in other projects.

"The cast of the show are tremendous. We get on really well. It's like a repertory theatre company: every week we get together and do a new play! As long as I can do other things as well, I'm really happy to go on as O'Brien. We're on our third season and I can see the show going on for at least six seasons. It's a great cast and I'm enjoying it."

Colm will also be returning to the role he made famous in Alan Parker's *The Commitments* (with the immortal line 'Elvis *wasn't* a fucking cajun!' which was repeated in the tv version of Freddy Doyle's second book in the series The *Snapper*). The third book is *The Van* and Colm is being signed up to return. At the moment the plans are to make it into a feature like the first film and Colm is looking forward to heading back to Ireland.

Whether in a rural Irish valley for films like the charming *War of the Buttons*, assisting Tommy Lee Jones' terrorist in *Under Siege* or in deep space fighting the Cardassians and their prone-to-go-wrong technology, Colm Meaney is doing pretty well in his acting career. There are few actors that can go from one genre and character to another with the frequency and success that he manages and still remember what day of the week it is...or, for that matter which planet they're on. *War* or not...Colm has his fingers on all the right buttons. CW



JOHN MOSBY's previous articles for Comic World include last month's interview with Adam West.

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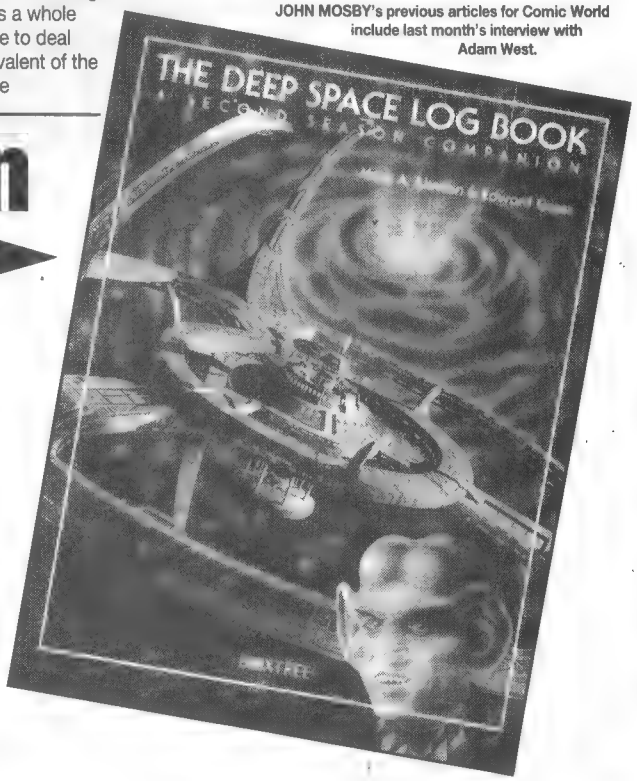

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Lee, Tanith *A Heroine of the World.* Headline, £16.99. A fortune teller predicts that Ara will become the focus of great events. Now a captive carried far away from home she can only wait to discover her destiny.

Little, Bentley *Night School.* Headline, £16.99. The University of Brea in California is more than a collection of buildings; it's a living entity with a psychotic mind. Maybe that explains why the school has a high count of crime, violence, suicide, rape and murder.

Mortimore, Jim *Parasite.* Dr Who, £4.99. Another New Adventure by the author of two previous, popular stories. Set in the weird, inside-out world of The Artifact, the Doctor, Ace and Benny are trapped when the eco-system begins to collapse and the long-lost human colony itself begins to turn into something new and strange.

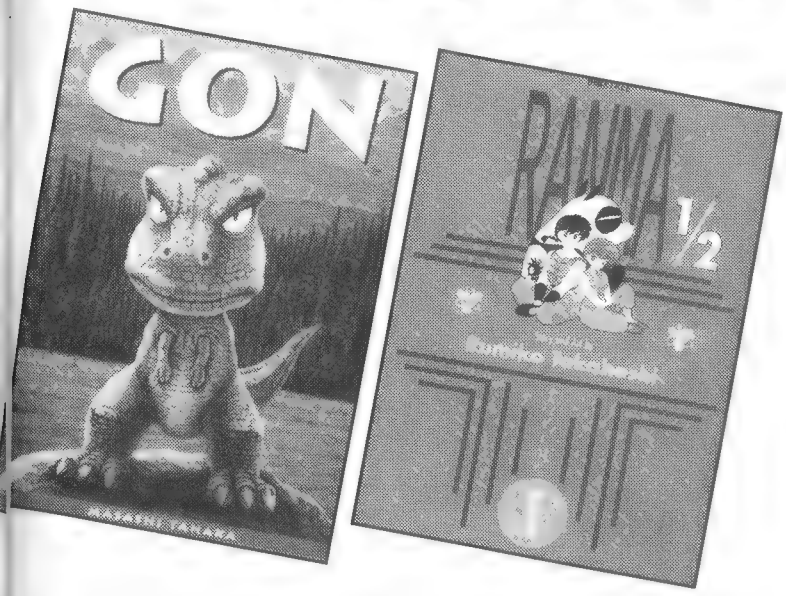
Murdoch, Jim *Rise of the Robots.* Penguin, (tbc). Based on the Time Warner interactive computer game, revealing the origin of Coton, the cyborg who leads the robot revolt against their female supervisors in Metropolis 4 on T1 Creada.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

Akira Vol.1, Domu *and* Memories, by Katsuhiro Otomo (Mandarin, £10.99, £8.99, £8.99). Already a classic, and so widely known do you really need me to tell you the plot of *Akira*? Reading the *manga* upon which the hit movie was based, you realise how ingeniously Otomo condensed the rambling story into a mere two hours. Reprinting the Epic version masterfully coloured by Steve Oliff, Otomo builds, layer upon layer, the reality of Neo Tokyo with its sleazy bars, secret police and biker gang warfare. The book and film diverge only slightly here, but watch out for future volumes as Akira is resurrected and Tetsuo becomes the leader of the Akira cult. *Domu* on the other hand is previously unseen in the UK, a self-contained and intense piece of SF noir about a perverse old man's sadistic control over the inhabitants of a housing block and the psychic battle that develops between him and a new arrival. The centre piece is an extended, kinetic battle of the minds the likes of which are unlikely to be seen anywhere but Japan. *Memories* is also mostly unseen in the West, a collection of stories which include the classic title story, which owes more than a little to Kubrick's 2001, and 'Fireball' an early, incomplete work which points the way to both *Domu* and *Akira*. All three volumes are highly recommended.

Gon, by Masashi Tanaka (Mandarin, £8.99). Set in the non-verbal but all too expressive world of Gon, a pint-sized Tyrannosaurus Rex, who seems to have escaped extinction out of sheer bloody-mindedness to live amongst today's

Media



wildlife. As far as Gon is concerned, dinosaurs still rule the Earth; it's his job to get on with the basics - eating, sleeping, learning to fly, while the rest of the world is expected to rearrange itself around his aims. Or be mown over. As Gon proves, size definitely isn't everything. Beautifully realised strips by an artist with an eye for realistic yet expressive wildlife who manages to get across his blackly humorous stories without the need for words.

Ranma 1/2 Vols 1-2, by Rumiko Takahashi (Boxtree, £5.99 each). First British appearance of one of Japan's most famous *manga* artists. Ranma is a teenage martial arts student who suffers an ancient curse: whenever he's splashed with cold water he turns into a girl! This doesn't go down too well with Akane, a young tomboy with whom Ranma's father has prearranged a marriage. Nor with Kuno, a young trainee samurai with a crush on Akane. The stage is set for a story full of colourful characters, comic misunderstandings, and truly outrageous martial arts action within what can best be described as a love octagon. A hilarious and crazy comedy that's highly recommended.

Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi, by Tom Veitch and various artists (Boxtree, £10.99). Collecting the 5-issue Dark Horse series, and adding 'The Freedon Nadd Uprising' by

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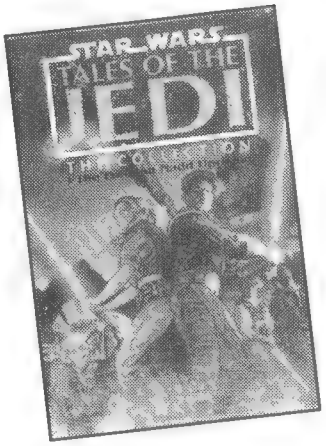


Tony Adkins & Denis Rodier in a value for money package set far in the past and chronicling the development of two novices destined to become legends amongst Jedi Knights, Ulic Quel-Droma and Nomi Sunrider. When the Dark Force takes control of the young planet of Oderon, the Jedi help the planet's rebel forces, but only discover the true power of the Dark Side when they come face to face with the spirit of the Sith Lord, Freedon Nadd. The artwork varies in quality, which makes for a disjointed quality in an otherwise fine story.

FILMS

As it's the end of the year it's worth a look at both past and future, starting with the biggest successes of the year. For the UK that was **Four Weddings and a Funeral** which has taken an astonishing £27.4m. The rest of the top ten (and take in £m): 2 **Mrs Doubtfire** (21.0), 3 **The Flintstones** (20.2), 4 **The Lion King** (19.3) 5 **The Mask** (17.2), 6 **Aladdin** (16.2, opened Nov 1993), 7 **Schindler's List** (13.8), 8 **Forrest Gump** (13.5), 9 **True Lies** (12.8), 10 **Speed** (10.6), with **Addams Family Values** (6.5) the only other comic related show in the top twenty at #14. Special award for trying must go to **Reservoir Dogs** which has now clocked up over 100 weeks on release and made as much here as it did in the States. In the USA the top ten (and $m take) runs thus: 1 **Forrest Gump** (295.9), 2 **The Lion King** (289.0), 3 **Mrs Doubtfire** (168.8), 4 **True Lies** (146.1), 5 **The Flintstones** (130.5), 6 **Clear and Present Danger** (121.3), 7 **Speed** (121.2), 8 **The Mask** (113.6), 9 **Maverick** (101.6), 10 **The Pelican Brief** (100.8), runners up including **Addams Family Values** (48.9) and **Time Cop** (44.3), the latter released here on January 6.

1995 should see the following comic related films released: **Richie Rich** (aaagh! Culkin! Easter), **Tank Girl** (with Lori Petti, May), **Caspar** (the friendly ghost, July), **Judge Dredd** (released July 4th in the USA, July 21st in the UK), and **Batman Forever** (summer release in the USA, probably autumn over here), plus the animated **Asterix in America**. Others could go straight to video depending on how they do in the USA.

Dredd looks like it could be the biggie of the year, although hopes are being pinned on Kevin Costner's **Waterworld** to pull in the audiences after his last couple of films flopped. Of course, **Die Hard 3** will finish in the top ten next year. Go see **Stargate** - on release now as you read this - which is wonderful. I've yet to see **Generations,** the last *Star Trek*, but it's doing good business in the USA and should be out here on February 17.

Others to (maybe) look out for: **Blankman** has Damon Wayans as a neighbourhood super-hero, which is fun if you don't expect it to be good, **Ed Wood** by *Batman's* Tim Burton, all about the cross-dressing director of *Plan 9 From Outer Space* and other classics, not burning the box-office in the USA but worth a look in (March 31), **Johnny Mnemonic** with Keanu Reeves, a dark adaptation of William Gibson's cyberpunk short story which co-stars Dolph Lundgren and Takeshi (*Violent Cop*) Kitano, this summer's **Lassie** with Helen (*Supergirl*) Slater...hey, just testing.

Stallone has dropped out of *Dead Reckoning*, and the film looks set to go into turnaround unless the producers revert to the original script which had a female lead...a new **Superman** movie is in the works with Jon Peters, former head of Sony Pictures, developing the film for Warner from a script by Jonathan Lemkin...Turner Pictures have announced live action versions of **The Jetsons** and **Scooby Doo**...if that's too gross to even think about, **Street Fighter** has spawned a new games-to-movies trend, the latest being **Dungeons and Dragons: The Movie** which at least has Stan Winston attached for the special effects...

Movie magic: Michelle Pfeiffer is the star of **Up Close and Personal**, a biopic of American TV anchorwoman Jessica Savitch, co-starring Robert Redford, which begins filming in March...and where in real life Savitch drowned, Touchstone are planning a happy ending: Redford has said "It's a Disney film, so she lives."

VIDEO

Since we're listing the Top Ten films above, here are the Top Ten video rental releases for 1994: 1 **The Fugitive**, 2 **Jurassic Park**, 3 **Demolition Man**, 4 **In the Line of Fire**, 5 **Sleepless in Seattle**, 6 **Mrs Doubtfire**, 7 **Four Weddings**, 8 **Cliffhanger**, 9 **The Firm**, 10 **Passenger 57**. Of comic related films, **Dennis** menaces at #27, **The Crow** flies in at #34, and **Addams Family Values** spooked up a #37 position.

BBC Video have cut the price of 13 **Dr Who** titles for a limited time from Februry 13 before they're deleted until August 1995. Three titles previously released as edited movie-length stories are now available in their originally transmitted format: *Spearhead from Space*, *Death to the Daleks* (both with Jon Pertwee) and *Robots of Death* (with Tom Baker).

ANIME

News: PolyGram Filmed Entertainment has completed a deal begun in April to take over Island Pictures, the latter joining Island Records - taken over in 1989 - as part of the Island Entertainment Group. These various moves give PolyGram a small interest in Manga Entertainment, who sold their millionth anime tape in 1994, although Manga remains 90% independent. This follows the recent acquisition by Manga's American office, the Chicago-based Manga Entertainment Inc. of California-based LA Hero, which will remain under President, Ken Iyadomi; add to that a co-production deal for the animated *Ghost in the Shell* (due late 1995), and the full production, *Floodlands,* underway, plus their expanding publishing interests, Manga are rapidly becoming a major force in anime worldwide.

Western Connection have a packed release schedule for the next four months, with sixteen titles in store. The first batch includes **Devil Hunter Yoko, Salamander, Ushio & Tora** and **Lupin III: The Fuma Conspiracy** available from January 23.

Kiseki are releasing further volumes of **Robotech, Ambassador Magma** and **Starblazers** on January 23. The third *Robotech* contains episodes 7-9, the fifth *Magma* has episodes 10-11, and the third *Starblazers* has episodes 10-12 of *The Quest for Iscandar*. Both **Urotsukidoji III: The Return of the Overfield Vol.3** and **Adventure Duo** (a.k.a. *Adventure Kids*) are released in a subtitled editions on the same day.

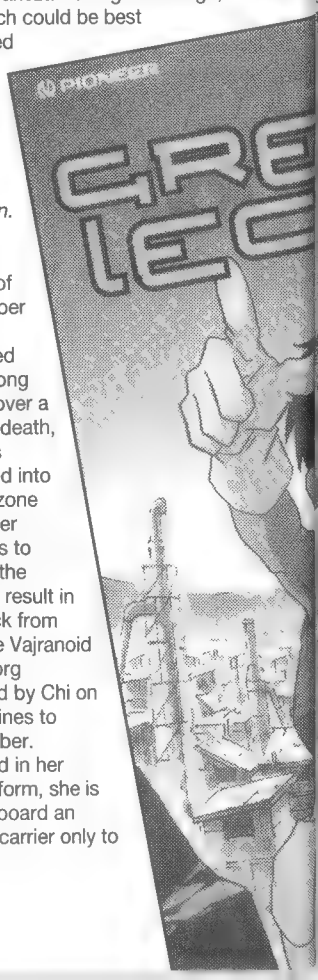
Anime Projects have Volumes 3 and 4 of **Urusei Yatsura TV** for January 23 release, and will follow that on February 27 with **Urusei Yatsura Movie: Always, My Darling.** March 27 will see the launch of **Oh My Goddess**, the first volume entitled *Moonlight and Cherry Blossom*, the second (released April 24) entitled *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Also released in March is the first English language volume of **Bubblegum Crisis: Tinsel City**.

AD Police 2: *The Paradise Loop. Dir* Masami Ota, Hiroyuki Kitazume. Cybernetic Jack the Ripper episode where prostitutes are being dismembered by a murderer stalking the old, crime infested subway known as the Paradise Loop. The savagery of the murders suggests a berserk Voomer is on the loose and the AD Police are called in. But a young woman on the regular police force discovers the truth is far more complex: when cybernetic technology is used to replace failing organs, how much of a person's humanity is left? And how far can it be taken before the line between human and machine is blurred? 25m. Manga MANV 1066. Cert 18.

AD Police 3: I Want Medicine. *Dir* Hiroyuki Kitazume, Masami Ota. When AD Policeman Billy Farnwood is critically injured in a Voomer attack, scientists seize the opportunity to create the ultimate anti-Voomer cyborg; it results in Billy's human mind being trapped in an unfeeling, desensitised machine body, addicted to drugs in a bid to give him if only one human sensation. As his withdrawal symptoms increase, so does his capacity for violence until - finally driven insane - he goes on a murderous rampage. This well-animated, extremely violent cyberpunk series ends on one of the most memorable lines ever dreamed up in movies: "Shoot my tongue," is worth the entry price alone. 27m. Manga MANV 1068. Cert 18.

Crying Freeman Eps 5-6: The Impostor & The Russian Connection (1992). *Dir* Shigemori Yamauchi. The two concluding anime episodes of the Chinese Mafia series sees Freeman captured during his hunt for another assassin by a religious fanatic who creates a replica of him to infiltrate and control 108 Dragons. In the final episode 108 dragons become involved in a battle for Mafia control with a power hungry leader of a rival organisation, determined to be the victors. Usual blood, guts and sex, due to be toned down for the censors, plus a rather unsuccessful attempt to reproduce Ikegami's inking style exactly in the animation. 100m. MANV 1039. Cert 18.

Genocyber Stage 2: Vajranoid Attack (1993). *Dir* Koichi Ohata. Second part of Manga Video's cyberpunk anime based on Tony (*AD Police*) Takezaki's original manga, and which could be best described as The Guyver meets *Devilman*. Having gained control of Genocyber and vaporised Hong Kong in grief over a friend's death, Elaine is propelled into a battlezone where her attempts to protect the civilians result in an attack from from the Vajranoid - a cyborg powered by Chi on similar lines to Genocyber. Rescued in her human form, she is taken aboard an aircraft carrier only to



discover the Vajranoid is based there, and all hell breaks loose again. 23m. Manga MANV 1067. Cert 18.

Genocyber Stage 3: Global War (1993). *Dir* Koichi Ohata. Global meaning shipboard as the story of the battle aboard the giant aircraft carrier continues, the Vajnaroid - at one point seemingly defeated - is reformed by his creator, Sakomizu, and immediately fuses with the ship, oozing through the corridors until they look like an Aliens' hive. Only Elaine and her nurse left to fight the final conflict. 23m. Manga MANV 1069. Cert 15.

Green Legend Ran Vols 1 and 2 (1992). *Dir* Satoshi Saga. An ecological fantasy set in a future where six totem-like aliens known as Holy Mothers have transformed Earth into a desert world and provide the only inhabitable areas with water around them. The planet is also torn apart by warring factions of the ruling Rodoists and the rebel Hazzard forces; in the midst of the fighting arrives Ran, a young orphan searching for the murderer of his mother. But his motivations of mere vengeance soon change when he becomes involved with Aira, a mysterious young girl who has some strange link to the Holy Mothers themselves. 45m each. Pioneer PIO 10005 and PIO 10006. Cert PG.

The Guyver Data 10: Haunted Village (1992). *Dir* Masahiro Otani & Naoto Hashimoto. With Sho's father dead and Sho himself injured and traumatised, the group attempt a break for freedom to a nearby village, only to discover the inhabitants are all Zoanoids. Double agent Agito returns to Chronos to subvert Dr. Balcus' attack on his friends, only to be unmasked as Guyver III and attacked. Sho cannot bring himself to become Guyver I after killing his Dad, and all in all, it's turning into a rotten day for all concerned. The actual animation has slipped in quality but the series gets more unintentionally funny each episode. 26m. Manga MANV 1053. Cert PG.

The Guyver Data 11: The Beastmaster (1992). *Dir* Masahiro Otani & Naoto Hashimoto. More of the same, with Sho miraculously recovered and showing no signs of having had his brain torn out apart from an inability to turn into the Guyver at will. There's one of those quiet moments you get after escaping from a village full of Zoanoids where all you want to do is sit down, have a picnic, and learn two million year's worth of Earth history. The Zoanoids attack, Murakami reveals himself to be a Zoalord and Aptom, now a wild card out of Dr. Balcus' control, spies over Sho and Mizuki. The calm before the storm - next month the series comes to a climax. 26m. Manga MANV 1056. Cert PG.

The Legend of the 4 Kings Chapters 1 & 2 (1991). *Dir* Shigeru Ueda, Yoshihiro Yamaguchi. Chinese legend makes its presence felt in modern day Japan as the four Ryudo brothers - who have hitherto led normal lives - become the targets of some insidious political intrigues. As the attacks increase in violence, so the brothers find within themselves tremendous abilities and powers, discovering the nature of their past, their fantastic destiny, and the intentions of their enemy. An average, decent enough story - based on the novel by Yoshiki Tanaka - is livened up with some nice illustrative shots between frames and the presence of a comic strip - *Stigmata* by Jim Alexander & Steve Potter. 92m. Manga MANV 1064. Cert 15.

Moldiver Eps 5-6: 'Intruder' and 'Verity' (1993). *Dir* Hiroyuki Kitazume. In the Moldiver finale, Mirai attempts to deliver the *Moldiver* unit, now divided into two components, to protect her beloved Misaki on the maiden voyage of the rocket Sakigake. But Professor Machinegal's androids attempt to sabotage the lift-off and - just when they've been dealt with - another threat materialises in the form of a third Moldiver! 58m. Pioneer PIO 10008. Cert PG.

Tenchi Muyo Eps 5-6: 'Kagato Attacks' and 'We Need Tenchi' (1992). *Dir* Hiroki Hayashi. The concluding episodes of the first series sees the arrival of villain Kagato, who has come for Tenchi's sword, the key to the ultimate force of the universe. He kidnaps Ryoko, and the rest of the cast pursue him for the ultimate outer space showdown, but with Tenchi apparently killed in battle and the others made Kagato's prisoners, the odds for the rest of the universe don't look good... 60m. Pioneer PIO 10007. Cert PG.

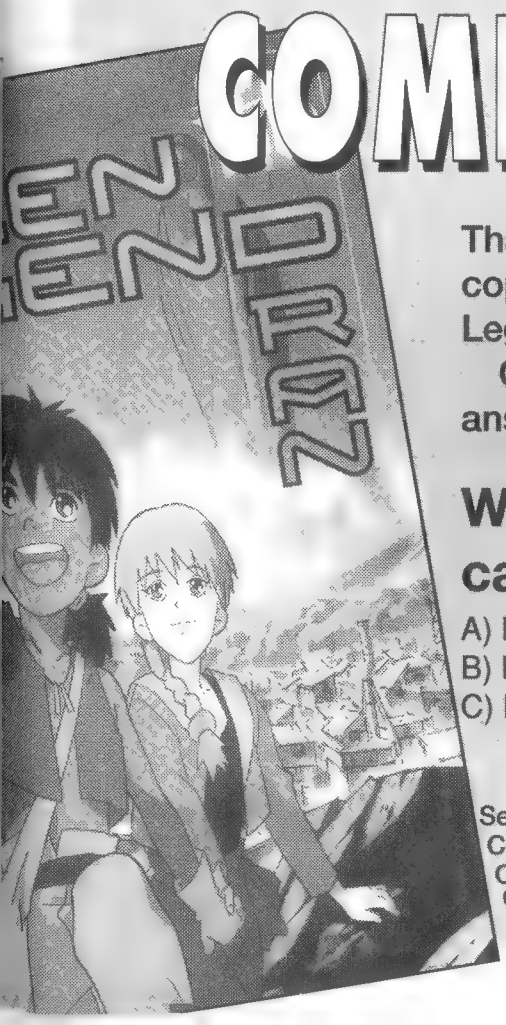
Wings of Honneamise (1987). *Dir* Hiroyuki Yamaga. Reviewed on its theatrical release in issue 34, but worth reiterating for the video release: this is one of the most thoughtful, fully realised and sumptuously animated anime releases to date. 119m. Manga MANV 1065. Cert 15.

ANIMATION

With Pete T. listing the top rental vids above, it's interesting to note that the Top Three retail videos of 1994 were Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, Aladdin and Bambi, ahead of Jurassic Park at #4 and Mrs Doubtfire at #5. Other Disney chart hits were Beauty and the Beast came in at #11, Jungle Book at #14, Peter Pan at #33, Dumbo at #65, Robin Hood at #71 and Bedknobs & Broomsticks at #100. With a March release for The Aristocats and the Lion King lined up for autumn, Disney are already planning to take some of the high spots in the 1995 chart. Nick Parks' Wallace and Gromit: The Wrong Trousers was at #19, and A Grand Day Out at #35, and he's currently working on a third film, whilst the Beano Video Stars scored a hit at #79, and the American Dennis (the Menace) came in at #82.

Lumiere are releasing two **Spider-Man** tapes on February 6, priced £10.99. Lumiere are also releasing two **Tintin** tapes, *The Black Island* and *Tintin in America* on March 6th, both priced £9.99.

COMPETITION TIME!



Thanks to the generosity of Pioneer, you can win not only a copy of the excellent Green Legend Ran video but a Green Legend Ran T-Shirt as well!

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TELEVISION

Terry Pratchett's **Johnny and the Dead** is to be adapted for TV as a two-hour movie, starring Andrew Falvey as 12-year-old Johnny Maxwell. The director is Gerald Fox and George Baker, Brian Blessed and Jane Lapotaire also star.

The BBC are to screen a new 26-part animated series, **The Prince of Atlantis** which is being produced by computer and mixes 2D and 3D imagery. It seems that Brendan McCarthy's predictions (see earlier this issue) are coming true sooner than even he thought. And **Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman** should return in February for a second season which concentrates less on romance and more on adventure.

After the announcement of the film you've all been waiting for: **Mighty Morphin Power Rangers**, a $40m production from Twentieth Century Fox, comes news that the Japanese studio Toei and US producers Saban are teaming up to produce **Masked Rider**, a series that ran on Japanese TV between 1971-1990. Toei will produce 50 episodes for the US for delivery in September 1995, with a feature film to follow in 1997. And Tsuburaya, the producers of **Ultraman**, there are plans for a 52-episode English language package to be produced with an American company, plus a new series for Japan, and a feature film. The company already have a 14-episode video deal with Major Havoc in the USA.

Gerry Anderson has demanded that his name be removed from a new American re-formatted version of **Thunderbirds** - entitled **Turbo Charge Thunderbirds** - which incorporates live-action sequences, re-writes stories and has new voice actors. The syndicated series began in December, much to Anderson's dismay. He was not involved at any point in the production. Talks are still underway about a new state-of-the-art electronic and stop-motion puppet version and a live-action Thunderbirds film is being developed by ITC.

TRADING CARDS

Skybox's **Vertigo Trading Cards** should be in the shops now, a 90-card set, 42 featuring cover art and 47 character cards featuring original art (plus a checklist). The oversized cards have art by Dave McKean, Glenn Fabry, Charles Vess, Brian Bolland, etc. There are also six bonus cards embossed with a gold foil border.

Comic Images have a 90-card series based around **Tank Girl** based on and featuring still from the movie. There are plenty of bonus cards too: a 6-card chase set with *Deadline art*, a medallion card, a 3-card Ripper sub-set and 500 cards randomly inserted have been signed by Lori Petti.

MAGAZINES

Eagle Times Vol.7 No.4 (Win 1994). Quarterly journal of the Eagle Society. Interviews this issue include Robert Bartholemew, features on Frank Bellamy, the Epsom Studio, Denis McLoughlin, Charles Chilton, Wilfred Grenfell, Jack o'Lantern and an Eagle guide to London. Subscriptions: £16 per year, Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middx. HA1 2UA.

Fumetti d'Italia #14 (Jan/Feb 1995). Glossy bi-monthly Italian language magazine published by Editrice Europa S.r.l., Corso Europa, 12-20122 Milano. Featured this issue are Nicola Mari, Nevio Zecarra (who used to draw for Fleetway and Gold Key in the 1960s), Loredano Ugolini (another one-time contributor to British comics), and publisher Daniele Brolli. A couple of IRCs should get you further information.

Princes of the Universe #1 (Dec 1994), edited by Joe O'Callaghan, is the newsletter of the *Highlander* appreciation society, The Clan. If you want details, send an SAE to Joe at 2 Caswell Close, Leicester LE4 2GH.

TripWire (Dec 1994), £1.75. A more rounded issue than of late, with columns by Frank Wynne, Gordon Rennie, Arthur Ranson, part two of an interview with Grant Morrison, reviews of comics and music, competitions, Voices and vitriol. If you can't find this in a shop you can contact editor Joel Meadows at 41 Parkside, Mill Hill, London NW7 2LN.

EVENTS

MARTS

21 Jan **Manchester.** Sachas Hotel, Tibb Street, Piccadilly.
28 Jan **London.** Westminster Central Hall, Storey's Gate, SW1. Special Guest: Caroline Monroe.
28 Jan **Newcastle.** University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road.
29 Jan **Leicester.** YMCA, Granby Street.
4 Feb **Nottingham.** Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street.
4-5 Feb **GENERATIONS: THE STAR TREK CONVENTION.** The Royal Albert Hall, London. Special Guests: Patrick Strewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spiner, Levar Burton, Michael Dorn, Gates McFadden, Marina Sirtis. Tickets: from £8.00. Ticket line: 0171 838 3100 and 0905 613 005. Further information: SAE to Horizon Conventions International, 22 Reindeer Court, City Centre,

COMICS ON MICROFICHE

MicroColour International Ltd. are offering exact reproductions of rare comics - ads and all - at easily affordable prices on Microfiche. Of course, you need a microfiche reader...and MicroColour offer the desktop MicroColor Model 1100 which will reproduce the comics at 100% of their original size. The New Jersey and London based company has been reproducing Golden Age comics for some years and now offer a huge range, from *Action Comics #1* and *Superman #1* to *Detective Comics #27, Batman #1* and many other classics. With Price Guide values for these running into five figures, the microfiche reprints, at £8.25 (including VAT) with a minimum of 5 ordered, make an attractive alternative to anyone wishing to build up an archive of Golden Age titles. For easier viewing, a relatively inexpensive handheld portable viewer costs only £67.00. For further information, MicroColour can be contacted at 1 Rylton House, 2 Hersham Road, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 1LB.

Worcester WR1 2OS.
5 Feb **London.** Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1. Card Mart.
11 Feb **Cardiff.** The Angel Hotel, Westgate Street.
11 Feb **Glasgow.** City Halls, Candleriggs.
11 Feb **Liverpool.** Bluecoat Concert Hall, School Lane.
11 Feb **Sheffield.** Main Hall, Sheffield Hallam University, Howard Street.
12 Feb **Liverpool.** Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street.
18 Feb **Gloucester.** Gloucester Leisure Centre, Bruton Way.
18 Feb **Hull.** Valiant House Hotel, Anlaby Road.
19 Feb **London.** Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way, WC1.
19 Feb **AYL-CON II: DR WHO CONVENTION.** Birmingham. Tickets: £28 for full weekend. Further information: SAE to AYL-CON, PO Box 85, Amerhamsham, Bucks HP7 9QZ.
25 Feb **Brighton.** Brighton Centre, Kings Road (seafront).
25 Feb **Glasgow.** Mitchell Theatre, Granville Street. Mart and collectables auction. Guests: Alan Grant, Grant Morrison.
25 Feb **Leeds.** Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way.
25 Feb **London.** Central Club Hotel, 16-22 Great Russell Street, WC1. Special guests: Nicholas Courtney, Elisabeth Sladen, Dave Prowse.
4 Mar **Birmingham.** Carrs Lane Church Centre.
4-5 Mar **KONMOREX KLINGON.** Hobbit Inn, Halifax. Trek con with a bias towards Klingons. Further information: Jo A. Boddy, Something Else, PO Box 16, Consett, Co. Durham DH8 8YZ. Telephone: 0207 592 211.
10-12 Mar **THE NEUTRAL ZONE.** The Forte Crest Hotel, Newcastle. Special Guests: Bjo Trimble, Richard Arnold, Ron B. Moore, Robert Llewellyn (tbc). Further information: SAE to The Neutral Zone, 15 Annandale, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 3QX.
11 Mar **Bristol.** New Trinity Community Centre, Trinity Road, St. Philips.
11 Mar **Cambridge.** The Guildhall, Wheeler Street.
12 Mar **London.** Camden Centre, Bidborough Street, WC1.
18 Mar **Manchester.** Sachas Hotel, Tibb Street, Picadilly.
18-19 Mar. **GLASCOW COMIC ART CONVENTION.** Clyde Hall, Clyde Street, G2. Special Guest: Mike Allred. Entrance fees: 1 day: £7.50, both days: £10.00. Deadline for advance bookings: March 3. Further information: SAE to Rusty Staples, PO Box 146, Glasgow G1 5RN.

MULTI MEDIA was written and performed by Neil Cooper, Steve Holland, Melissa Hyland, Dave McLoughlin and Peter Taylor, mostly whilst hung-over during Christmas

NEWSFLASH

Jim Shooter, who has kept a low profile since the demise of Defiant in the autumn, has re-emerged as Editor-in-Chief of Broadway Comics, a division of Broadway Video, one of the largest New York-based TV and film distribution companies. Joining Shooter at Broadway will be various ex-Valiant/Defiant alumni, including Janet Jackson, Pauline Weiss, Joe James and J. Clark Smith. Currently in development under Shooter are two projects: Powers That Be, a science fiction/superhero book, and Electropolis, the story of an electronic underground inhabited by characters known as Technomancers.

We have just received news that a number of editors at Marvel received their redundancy notices on January 5, 1995. The rumours of layoffs have been in the air for some weeks now (see Up Front, #35). Both Richard Burton and Craig Anderson are amongst the 15 editors believed to have gone. More news next month.

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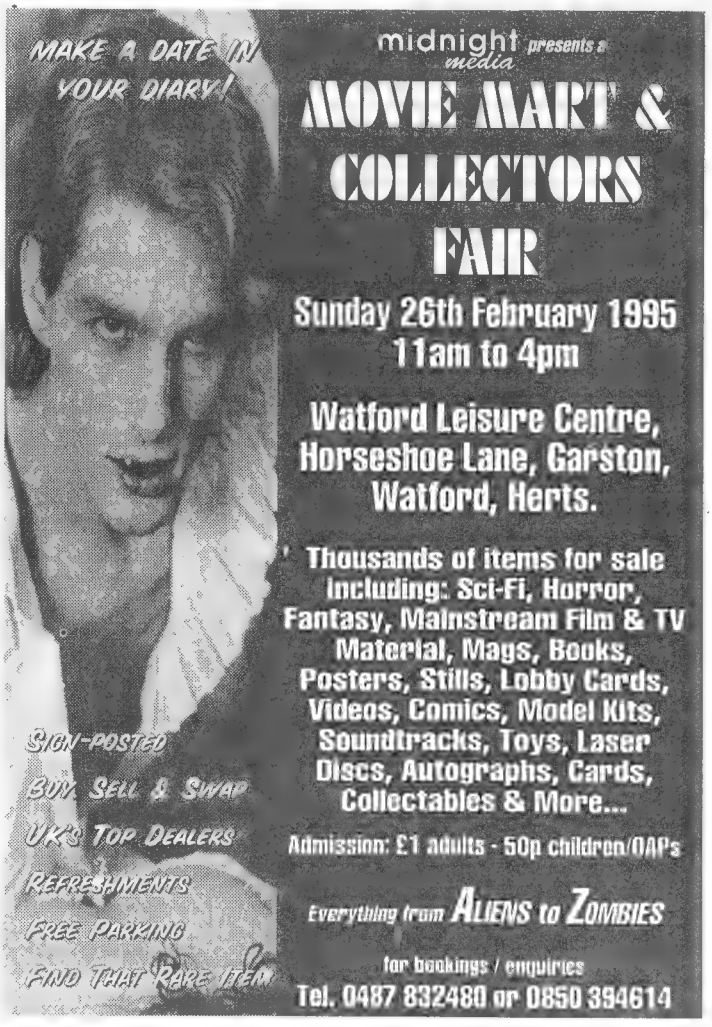
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36

audience, and *Solo*, which began by reprinting Disney material but later featured a strip by Don Harley called The Mark of The Mysterons. Although set in the 1960's and having virtually no connection with Captain Scarlet, it did nonetheless help publicise the new TV series which debuted in *TV21* in September 1967. Ron Embleton, Mike Noble, Jim and Keith Watson, along with Don Harley and John Cooper all illustrated that strip at some point, with Frank Bellamy providing occasional covers. Solo itself was merged with City Magazine's *TV Tornado* after 30 issues in 1967, and the Mysterons strip, now set in the 21st century, related the Mysterons' attempts to conquer the rest of the universe whilst continuing their 'war of nerves' with Earth.

In January 1968, *TV21* was revamped. The newspaper front page was diminished to a headline and publicity photo, along with the first three panels of the Captain Scarlet strip. During the coming year, Fireball and Stingray would be phased out in favour of new features like the apocalyptic Project Sword, and later on, strips brought in from *TV Tornado*, which merged with TV21 in September 1968 after 88 issues. Soon, The Saint, Tarzan and Department S would all be jostling for space along side the remaining Anderson strips, and they would be joined in 1969 by articles on football and space exploration.

With the cancellation of *Solo* and *TV Tornado*, everyone seemed eager to launch a new comic. *Joe 90 Top Secret*, launched in January 1969, faced the unfortunate situation where there was more confidence in the planned back up strips than there was in the title character. The problems were compounded when it was discovered that few readers would know what one of those strips - *Star Trek* - would be about. The BBC had bought the series, but didn't screen it until six months after the comic was launched.

By mid 1969, the recession that had hit Britain at the end of the 60's finally hit Century 21. In an effort to cut costs, *TV21* and *Penelope* both reduced their page sizes and colour material, and weaker titles like *Joe 90 Top Secret* were soon floundering. Century 21 sold its merchandising arms to concentrate on TV and film production only, and the publishing side of the business was gradually wound down. On September 6th, 1969, *TV21* and *Joe 90 Top Secret* merged, and shortly afterwards, City Magazines took over the sole production of the comic

After 242 issues, *TV21* was renumbered, and gradually the Anderson content was reduced. Star Trek became the cover feature, with artwork supplied by Mike Noble, Ron Turner, Harold Johns and Carlos Pino, succeeding that of Harry Lindfield and Jim Baikie. In July 1971, the comics were sold to IPC. *Candy* was merged with *Jack and Jill, Penelope* with *Princess Tina* and on September 25th, *TV21* was merged with *Valiant,* after 105 issues.

By this time, new magazines were competing for *TV21*'s former readership. Dennis Hooper went on to edit *Countdown,* using a combination of reprints from *TV21* and new material including Doctor Who. Alan Fennell created *Look-In*, which in its various guises, survived until earlier this year.

Reprints from *TV21* continued to appear occasionally in the '70s and '80s, mainly in the form of Dalek Annuals publishing the Ron Turner and Richard Jennings strips, or Polystyle Thunderbirds and Stingray Specials, where the *Countdown* and *TV21* strips barely survived the cheap printing process used. Finally, in 1989, *Action 21* was published by Engale Marketing in Blackpool, combining strips from *TV21* and *Lady Penelope* in a full colour monthly. It lasted only ten issues, killed by spiralling print costs and distribution problems.

With the revived popularity of Thunderbirds broadcast by the BBC in 1991, the strips from *TV21* made an appearance again, this time courtesy of Fleetway. In all, four titles were published, all edited by Alan Fennell. *Thunderbirds The Comic* survived the longest, with *Joe 90* repeating history with an even shorter run than its 1960s counterpart.

Looking back its hard to say what exactly makes a comic memorable. British comics

are generally aimed at children and the best ones encourage reader participation through the editorial pages. Both *Eagle* and *TV21* went to great lengths to involve the readership in the stories and characters, often through the letters and club pages, with varying degrees of success. Children can put a lot of themselves into a well produced comic, inventing a surprising amount of background detail about their favourite heroes.

TV21 recognised that contribution, but didn't short change the reader. A lot went into the stories about the future, but *TV21* didn't ignore the present either. Alan Fennell's script for the Thunderbirds Nicaraguan story reflects a period in 1966 when the Somosa family was still in power, and America's President Johnston was considering using atomic bombs to carve a canal through that country. The *TV21* storyline highlights the injustices which the Nicaraguan farmers were suffering, just as they were in real life.

TV21 had high production standards, common to many comics of the period, standards that offered artists the chance to do their best - standards that demanded the best. Backed by Associated Television, it reflected the flair of the shows that inspired it.

In the skies of the 1960s, *TV21* blazed briefly. But it blazed bright. CW

GRAHAM BLEATHMAN is probably best known for his cutaway drawings in Fleetway's Gerry Anderson related papers. An example of his brilliant cover art can be seen on *Comic World #14*.

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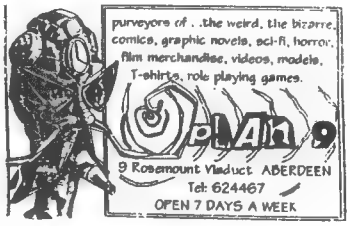
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Retail Spotlight

THE COMICS WAREHOUSE

In this, the first feature to bring the Comic World spotlight to bear on retail and mail order outlets around the country, we have chosen to showcase The Comic Warehouse, a company that is not only geographically close to us, but has grown with phenomenal speed over the last two years to establish itself as a mail order Powerhouse in the volatile world of comics in the United Kingdom.

Maldon, a quiet coastal town in Essex now houses one of the largest collections of commercially available back issues comics to be found outside America. When we visited the 12,000 square foot warehouse in Maldon which is the operating base of the Comics Warehouse, we found rack after rack of comic books all alpha-numerically organised for easy picking along with pallet after pallet of deep storage. Close to a million comics, of which half is available for sale at any one time.

The Comics Warehouse when it was formed just over two years ago adopted as its driving philosophy "to supply good, affordable comic books to readers and collectors." The key emphasis is on the word "affordable". Colin Campbell, owner/manager of the Warehouse decided, after an eight year absence to pursue other business interests, to return to comic books.

"Around 1991," he says, "I decided that I wanted to get back into comics. I researched how the business had changed since the early eighties, and what I found was both fascinating and appalling. The comic book business had expanded, contracted and expanded again. It was rife with fast buck merchants (including many publishers) charging premium prices for what I considered to be total tat. The Lemming mentality of speculation was paramount with collecting and reading coming in a very poor second and third.

"This seemed to me to be a complete inversion of how comic books a leisure entertainment should operate," he continues. "Number one is to find books to read, number two is to collect those book that you like and number three, if you are lucky, some of those book that you like to read and collect may grow in value as others discover their intrinsic worth. But that should not be an end in itself. It's a bonus."

During 1991 and '92, he gradually formed the idea of a heap one top mail order warehouse outlet for recent and semi current comic books and magazines.

"I bought in bulk," says Campbell. "I didn't worry about what's hot and what's not, just added a thin margin to cover overhead and offered the books to readers at the lowest prices I could afford."

Now, some three years later, comic fans and collectors all over Europe appear to agree with the concept and the Comics Warehouse numbers its customers in the thousands.

"We love supplying comics to readers who appreciate them, whether the parcel is large or small does not matter, we know that we are bringing pleasure to a customer, and that is a real kick."

Accurately processing hundreds of orders a week takes a small army of dedicated order entry persons, plus pickers, packers and checkers all backed up by a sophisticated computer control system for stock and processing.

A typical order timetable looks like this: say the order arrives on Monday, it will be processed then entered to the computer on Tuesday and a pick ticket run overnight. The comics will be picked, checked and packed on Wednesday, then - depending on courier pick up times - the parcel will be consigned on a two day delivery cycle to arrive on the customers doorstep Friday or the following Monday. National holidays such as Easter and Christmas along with inclement weather can sometimes slightly disrupt the pattern but essentially The Comics warehouse always strives to achieve a maximum of just one week from receipt of order to customer delivery.

In line with their innovative and expansionist philosophy, last year the Comics Warehouse very quietly launched a New Comics service for collectors and readers.

Using Capital City distribution and Advance Comics Catalogue for their supply of new comics and books, The Comics Warehouse offered a New Comics Service to their existing customers. The response to the new service was excellent, continues to grow, and has taken on a life of its own so that back issues and new comics are now run as separate divisions.

In the light of the comic book industry's current contracting phase with publishers and retailers failing en-mass, it's good to see a company where keen pricing backed up by excellent service and good customer relations is not only successful but is also giving readers what they want: affordable comics. CW

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M.	Mint Perfect
N.M.	Nearly Mint
V.F./V.F.N.	Very Fine
F.N.	Fine
V.G.	Very Good
G.	Good
F.	Fair
P.	Poor
B.S.	Bookshop Stamp on Cover
T.S.	Taped Spine
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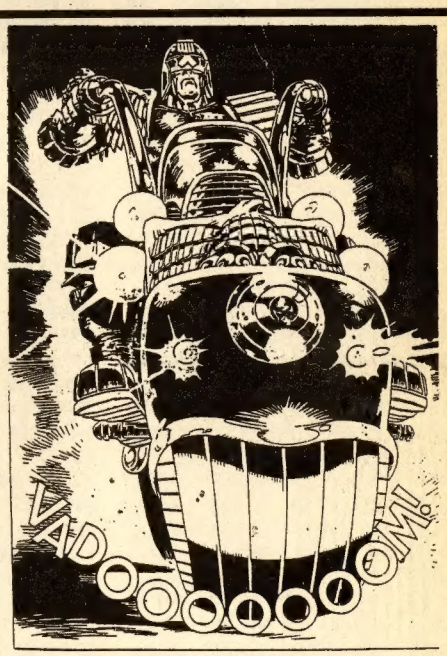

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